Translated by

John Wortley

THE BOOK OF THE ELDERS

Sayings of the Desert Fathers

The Systematic Collection

VISIT…

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The Book of the Elders
Sayings of the Desert Fathers

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Foreword by
Bernard Flusin

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The punctuation used throughout this book is the publisher's, not the translator's.

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gratam in memoriam

Joseph Paramelle, s.j., 1925–2011

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Foreword

Writing in the 850s, the future patriarch Photios took note in his celebrated *Bibliotheca* of a collection of apophthegms very similar to the one John Wortley has translated here: "This is a book especially useful to those who organise their lives with a view to their heavenly legacy. There is clarity in its style and moreover it is what a book ought to be that is in tune with people who are not thinking of exercising their talent but who have devoted all their effort and zeal to the doing of good works."[1] Thus are specified both the nature of the collection (this is ascetic literature) and that which above all makes it attractive to the eyes of the modern reader: its clarity and the absence of rhetoric.

The *Sayings of the Fathers* is first and foremost an ascetic work assembled by monks primarily for their own use. It brings together the sayings of "the fathers," meaning the great monks (the "elders") who were responsible for training disciples living in the semianchoretic communities of Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries of this era. So these very short texts, presented in large collections, are firmly rooted in a very precise milieu, and they ought to be read in the way they were originally intended to be received: each one as the charismatic utterance of a spiritual father, addressed to his familiar disciples or, on occasion, to visitors who came asking for a saying that would help them in their quest for salvation.

This is why the apophthegms make such an impression on us. The reader is directly confronted by the person of Antony or of Poemēn with nobody in between, and the elder speaks to him as to a disciple, guiding him along the steep and narrow path of asceticism. And yet this is not the teaching of only one father or mother: numerous monks speak with many voices. The editors of the collection gathered up what they could find of the sayings of the fathers and mothers of old time and in

[1] Photius, *Bibliothèque*, cod. 198, vol. 3, ed. and trans. René Henry (Paris: Société d'Éditions Les Belles Lettres, 1962), 95.

this way tried to show that while in one way the elders proclaimed a single message, each person could doubtless find what was appropriate (even intended) for him in the diversity of the advice that was given.

The apophthegms are nothing other than what the elders *said* or the brief, edifying tales they told. It is in their simplicity that the sayings convey a sense of freshness and immediacy: it is Antony himself or Arsenius who is speaking to us or of whose life we catch a brief glimpse. Yet it is important not to lose sight of the fact that we are dealing with a literary work. A considerable space of time separates the monks of the apophthegms and the text that we read now. After the age of the great anchorites who inspired them to do so, more than a century went by before the refugee monks from Scete assembled their collections of sayings—in the Gaza region or elsewhere in Palestine. And there was a difference of language. Most of the Desert Fathers spoke Coptic, while the collections were written in Greek. Literary elaboration has played its part too; extracts from written works (e.g., of Evagrius or of Doulas) might be included under cover of a small collection of sayings. It is also possible to detect some variation in spiritual sensibilities lurking behind the apparent consensus of teaching when certain dossiers are subject to intense scrutiny. The apophthegms were essentially conceived to give the impression of direct contact between a disciple and his spiritual master. They are nothing other then the transformation of that contact into writing, and their greatest success (due to the exclusion of all rhetoric) is their ability to recapture the irreplaceable element in the saying that is heard and in the example that is seen.

The apophthegms are addressed, as Photios says, "to those who organise their lives with a view to their heavenly legacy"; hence, this is a literature of an essentially ascetic nature; or, to use the categories popularized by Evagrius at the end of the fourth century, it restricts itself to the *praktika*. So nothing is to be found in it of the *theoria*: no theology, no teaching on the difficulties arising from Scripture. Even though the apophthegmatic collections (in their original form) were put together at a time when the Eastern churches were being disturbed by serious christological dissensions, they are silent on this subject. This characteristic assured them of a wide distribution. First edited in Greek (the alphabetic/anonymous collection perhaps at the end

of the fifth century, the systematic, translated here by John Wortley, probably at the beginning of the sixth), they were quickly diffused in Latin and Syriac. Then they were translated back into Coptic and, subsequently, into all the languages and confessions of medieval Christianity. In the Greek-speaking world they never ceased to be recopied, and from the second half of the sixth century they figured among the favorite readings of Eastern monks.

Lacking the protection of an author's name, the collections are defined by their *function*, which is to concentrate the teaching of the Fathers (insofar as this can be done). Hence, their contents are of many kinds and (especially in earlier times) always susceptible to modification and enrichment. This is why, although the collections are well known, they are still very badly edited. Their value for the history of monasticism or of spirituality became ever more clearly recognized in the course of the second half of the twentieth century when the fascinating and diversified world they bring back to life was more fully explored. But the immense effort they demand of the philologist has so far only very imperfectly been accomplished. Following in the footsteps of Wilhelm Bousset (1923), Jean-Claude Guy was able to unravel the manuscript tradition of the systematic collection (1962), and before his death he produced an edition of that collection, which Bernard Meunier was able to bring to completion.

For many years John Wortley has taken an interest in monastic literature, having produced some work on the related genre of the spiritually beneficial tale: a *Repertoire*[2] that can be consulted online, an edition of the *Tales of Paul of Monembasia*,[3] and an English translation of John Moschos's *Spiritual Meadow*.[4] Now, going back in time, he has turned to the older texts. With his linguistic abilities and his familiarity with early monastic literature, he has focussed his attention on the apophthegms, and in this volume he offers a precise

[2] home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~wortley/; *Scripta & E-scripta* 8/9 (2010): 93–306, with introductory essay by John Wortley.

[3] *The Spiritually Beneficial Tales of Paul, Bishop of Monembasia, and of Other Authors*, intro., trans., and commentary John Wortley, CS159 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1996).

[4] John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow*, trans. John Wortley, CS 139 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1992).

translation into simple English of Jean-Claude Guy's edition of the systematic collection.

Bernard Flusin
(translated by John Wortley)

Introduction

The early part of the fourth century of our era was a time of many changes. It saw the Roman Empire itself gradually transformed from a loose federation of provinces administered from Rome on the Tiber into a tightly controlled monarchy ruled (after 329) from the new capital on the Bosporus, Constantinople. It experienced the first shock waves from the movements of the so-called barbarian peoples who would eventually dominate a large part (and overshadow even more) of that Empire. It saw a new religion scarcely three centuries old gain the ascendancy over the many old religions that Rome had cheerfully tolerated, eventually to exclude them. It was in this context that certain devotees of the new religion, many men and some women, began to withdraw from "the world" (as they called society as we know it) to retreat into the desert, there to practice their new religion more seriously. They may have felt that its recent legalisation and the subsequent influx of people who merely liked to be on the winning side threatened its purity. Or they may have feared that the Hellenism of urban society was too strong for the new, largely Semitic faith to challenge without being compromised. They may simply have been trying to escape the increasing demands, fiscal and other, that the centralization of government was placing on all levels of society with increasing vehemence. But, whatever the reasons, out into the desert they went; and they did so in ever-increasing numbers.

These "withdrawers" (anchorites) were the first Christian monks; their luminaries were the so-called Desert Fathers. It was in what is now called Egypt that this great withdrawal first occurred. Most of the land there is desert, relieved only by the fertile valley of the Nile and its great estuary where sits that jewel of the Mediterranean, Alexandria. The earliest monks, however, were not from the Hellenized, urbanized delta; they were simple Coptic-speaking peasants (*fellahin*) from the smaller towns and villages of the Nile valley. We cannot say with certainty when their withdrawal first began, but we can say what

was the *immediate* cause of many taking the desert road. According to Athanasius, the contemporary and the biographer of Antony the Great (ca. 250–356), when Antony was still a very young man, he was reflecting on

> how the apostles abandoned everything and followed the Savior; how others sold their goods "and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the Apostles' feet" [Acts 4:35] to be given to those in need and what a great hope awaited them in heaven. While thinking about these things, he went into church just when the Gospel was being read and he heard the Lord saying to the rich man: "If you wish to be perfect, go and sell all your belongings; give [the proceeds] to the poor. Then come and follow me and you will have treasure in heaven" [Matt 19:21].[5]

In response, Antony promptly embarked on a long and highly influential monastic career. Largely on account of Athanasius's chronicle of that career, Antony is traditionally hailed as "the first monk" and the founder of the monastic tradition. Certainly many others heard the dominical challenge "If you wish to be perfect . . . ," sold up, and retreated into the desert; but it is clear from Athanasius's words that Antony was not exactly a pioneer:

> Now there was at that time an elder in the adjacent village who followed the ascetic, solitary life from his youth. When Antony saw him, he imitated him well and truly. At first he began himself living in the area outside the village. Then if he heard of anyone seriously [doing likewise] he would go and search him out like a wise bee and would not return to his own place until he had seen him and received from him provisions (as it were) for the road to virtue.[6]

We may never know who first embraced the desert "road to virtue," but it is clear from this passage that one who would do so had first to *learn* from another. The word "monk" does indeed mean "a loner," but the person who aspired to "renounce the world" must first find an "elder" (*gerōn*)—meaning a person advanced not necessarily in

[5] Athanasius, *Vita Antonii,* ed. and trans. G. J. M. Bartelink, *Athanase d'Alexandrie, Vie d'Antoine*, SCh 40 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1994), 2.2–3. Hereafter *VA*.

[6] *VA* 3.3.

age but certainly in monastic practice—who would accept him as a disciple and apprentice. To his elder (whom he would address as *abba*, "father") the neophyte owed complete obedience; from his *abba* (and other elders) he would receive "provisions (as it were) for the road to virtue." This provender came in two forms: first, there was the practical example of the *abba*'s own way of life; second, there was the verbal teaching of the elders in sayings and tales, setting out the theory and practice of the eremitic life.

Characteristically, the saying was a short, laconic statement expressing some vital point—for example, "Humility effaces many sins" [1.9; Isaiah of Scete]. On receiving a saying, the disciple would memorize and meditate upon it until his *abba* judged him ready for another piece of instruction. (For the early monks, "meditate" seems to have meant repeating something out loud, over and over again.[7]) After some considerable time and only in some cases, the *abba* might suggest that a disciple go and set up his own hermitage elsewhere. And if, in due course, that brother (now an "elder") were to receive disciples of his own, to these he would impart the tales and sayings he had learned from his *abba*. They in turn would teach them to others, all by word of mouth, and in this way an ever-increasing folklore of the desert was created and diffused.

In this desert lore, tales and sayings are intermixed like sand and gravel, and, as with sand and gravel, it is not always easy to say which is which. A mere glance at the surviving material reveals that there are several *narratives* or tales interspersed with the sayings, showing the sort of life an elder led and the actions he performed. Thus one can say that while the sayings define the theory, the tales describe the practice of desert monasticism (eremitic monachism). There are exceptions, but on the whole the distinction is a valid one. In due course the tales achieved an existence independent of the sayings and circulated freely outside the monastic community as "spiritually beneficial tales." There are already some tales in the present collection whose monastic connection is by no means evident.

□ □ □ □

[7] John Wortley, "How the Desert Fathers 'Meditated,'" *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 46 (2006): 315–28.

From an early date an important transition began to take place in the nature of the monastic community as the rough, Coptic-speaking first monks were joined by increasing numbers of the more sophisticated, Greek-speaking denizens of Alexandria, other cities of Egypt, and even further afield.[8] With their arrival the tales and sayings began to circulate in Greek as well as in Coptic. In due course they began to be written down; that is, they were written in Greek, and it is in Greek that they have come down to us. Those who composed the extant collections may have been refugees from Scete, the monastic location that features most prominently in the tales and sayings, known to have been devastated by barbarians from the Libyan desert three times at least. Scete had been the main, the most remote, and the most advanced center of monastic activity. At some point the displaced community of Scete and its hinterland seems to have been partially reconstituted in Palestine, in the wadis of the West Bank; and it was probably there that, at the end of the fifth century, refugee monks made the first attempts to record the lore of the Desert Fathers (*gerontika*, *paterika*) in writing. Their object was almost certainly to fix for posterity the memory of a land and a life they had been forced to abandon. Thus so many of the tales and sayings begin with the nostalgic phrase "Abba N. *used to say*" back in Scete, at The Cells, on the Mountain of Nitria, or simply "in the desert."

The earliest attempts to codify tales and sayings are lost; we only know of their existence because they are mentioned by the editor(s) whose work has survived. Those editors, presumably to impose some sort of order on the confusing mass of oral material in circulation, adopted the very sensible principle of gathering all the known sayings or activities of a certain *abba* under one head; then, by reference to the initial letter of the *abba*'s name, they set the heads in the order of the letters of the Greek alphabet. They started with Antony the Great, Arsenius, and Agathon and (about a thousand items later) concluded

[8] It is alleged that even Poemen, to whom an enormous number of sayings is attributed, did not speak Greek: "Abba John who was exiled by [the Emperor] Marcian [450–57] used to say: 'Coming from Syria, we once visited Abba Poemen and we wanted to ask him about hardness of heart. The elder did not speak Greek and there was no interpreter to hand. Perceiving our dismay, the elder began speaking in the Greek tongue, saying . . .'" Poemen 183, *APsys* [see n13 in this introduction] 18.21.

with Cheremon, Psenthaisius, and Ōr (X, Ψ, Ω). Incidentally, it was those editors who first employed the word "apophthegms" (*apophthegmata*) to describe the tales and sayings; hence the collection just described is known as *apophthegmata patrum alphabetica*, the Alphabetic Apophthegms of the Fathers (*APalph*).

The same editors realized, however, that there was still a large amount of material in circulation that, for some reason or other, had not been incorporated into *APalph*. Much of this consisted of tales and sayings with no name attached—for example, "An elder was asked . . ." or "One of the fathers *used to say*. . . ." This material they gathered into a supplementary collection now known as the Anonymous Apophthegmata (*APanon*) and also as Nau after Frédéric Nau who first published the items 1–400 at the beginning of the twentieth century.[9] The second half remains unpublished, but a complete edition and translation will shortly appear.[10] It is clear from the extant manuscripts that the editors attempted to impose some sort of order on these anonymous items too. They did this in the earlier part of the collection by grouping items of similar import with each other—for example, items dealing with humility, those on the subject of Christian charity, and so forth.

It would appear from the introduction to *APalph* that the two parts of the collection just described were made by the same person(s) at more or less the same time. Another major collection, the text of which is presented in this volume, probably began to emerge a generation or so later. It is easy to see why it was made: those attempting to live the monastic life needed to be able to consult *all* the available tales and sayings on any one topic without having to search through the two huge parts of the former collection, contained no doubt in several scrolls. The partial attempt of the editors of *APanon* to sort by topic was apparently appreciated; now that procedure was extended to the entire corpus. Thus there was generated the *systematic* collection (*APsys*). Twenty-one chapter heads were identified, each of them a monastic virtue or desideratum; then much of the

[9] Frédéric Nau, "Histoires de solitaires égyptiens," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 12 (1907) to 18 (1913).

[10] Ed. and trans. John Wortley, Cambridge University Press.

extant material was arranged under those heads. A typical chapter of *APsys* as it now stands contains, first, a selection from *APalph* (often preserving the original alphabetic order of the items), then maybe some extracts from the *Spiritual Discourses* of Isaiah of Scete[11] and/or sundry other items, mainly anonymous (for instance, the curious "medical" items in 16.17–20). Finally, each chapter reproduces a considerable number of selections from the anonymous apophthegms [*APanon*], to which some additional matter may have been appended.[12] Some of the chapters are quite short: no. 19, on miracles, has only twenty-one items, while no. 10, on discrimination, is the longest with almost two hundred. The entire collection now contains about 1,200 items compared with about one thousand in *APalph* and more than eight hundred in *APanon*.

□ □ □ □

While everything that has been stated so far is correct generally speaking, there is a complicating factor that must be taken into consideration: the instability of the texts. Until the invention of printing (and well beyond it in some cases), texts were transmitted in manuscript form; they were written out by hand. For the most part, copyists made it a point of honor to reproduce the exemplar before them as accurately as possible, so that (apart from the inevitable mistakes of human frailty) all the extant manuscripts of a given text tend to resemble each other fairly closely. Such, however, is not by any means the case where apophthegmatic material is concerned. The actual sayings of the fathers seem to have suffered least, maybe because these are usually short and therefore could be easily memorized verbatim. But alternative wordings, amplifications, additions, and changes in emphasis are not by any means uncommon even in the sayings. Some variations in sayings could also be due to a variety of translation from the original Coptic, a fortiori in the case of tales.

[11] Isaiah was a Monophysite monk who died at Gaza in 488. See *Abba Isaiah of Scetis: Ascetic Discourses*, trans. John Chryssavgis and Pachomios Penkett, CS 150 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2002).

[12] Chap. 21 exceptionally has no selections from *APalph* and only three pieces from Isaiah of Scete. Nearly all the rest of the contents are from *APanon.*

Here there can be such a breadth of variation that in extreme cases no more than the basic structure of the tale remains unchanged. This variation in sayings and tales may be explained by the coexistence over several centuries of the oral and written forms, which constantly contaminated each other. Thus a scribe might well set down not the dead text found in his exemplar but the living word he had received from the mouth of a charismatic *abba*. And if he had heard other tales not found in his exemplar, these he might not hesitate to include; or he might regroup material the way his teachers grouped them—and even omit items for which he had no oral authority. Thus the collections themselves vary in content almost as much as the tales vary in form, to the extent that it is rare indeed to find two manuscripts of apophthegmatic material that contain the identical contents in the same order as each other.

These variations present a great problem for today's scholars; doomed to disappointment are they who attempt to establish the *Urtext* of this material, for it is a structure based on the shifting sands of hearsay. The one thing that can be said with a degree of confidence is that the individual items, just like the collections in which they are found, do tend to expand (rarely to contract) with the passage of time. This tendency is clearly discernible when one examines an item at subsequent stages of its transmission: first in *APalph* or *APanon*, again in *APsys*, and then in the great eleventh-century *Synagogê* of Paul Euergetinos.[13] Indeed, the tales in particular are so skeletal and laconic when they first appear that one is led to suspect that the intention of the earliest editors may have been to present no more that the bare bones of a tale, never intended to be more than notes or even mere mnemonics for a story-teller who was *expected* to tell it in his own words and, of course, at his own length. If such were the case, then it was almost inevitable that the role of raconteur would begin to impinge on that of scribe.

□ □ □ □

[13] Paul Euergetinos, *A Collection* [*Synagōgē*] *of the inspired sayings of the godly and holy fathers* [. . .] (Venice: 1783; sixth edition, 4 vols., Athens: 1980).

When was *APsys* created? Clearly later than the two parts of the former collection, since it draws heavily on both: hence (roughly) after AD 500. A *terminus ante quem* is established in the third quarter of the sixth century by the existence of a Latin translation of the text made by the deacon Pelagius and the subdeacon John (*P&J*),[14] each of whom subsequently became pope of Rome (556–61 and 561–74, respectively). However, whereas the modern critical edition of *APsys* contains about 1,200 items, there are only 737 in *P&J*. Examination of the extant Greek manuscripts of *APsys* suggests that *P&J* is the earliest surviving evidence of a text in a state of evolution, two further stages of which are discernible. As there are no extracts from Isaiah of Scete in *P&J*, this would appear to represent the most primitive extant version of the text. A second version is characterized by the incorporation of a little material by Isaiah of Scete, while a third one not only includes a large amount of Isaiah but also presents evidence of the other contents having been somewhat rearranged to accommodate it.[15]

It is this third version that is translated in this volume. A *terminus ante quem* is established by the oldest extant manuscript of the text, Athos Lavra B 37, copied in AD 970. One might suspect that the process of the evolution of the text had more or less come to an end some considerable time before that date, but it might nevertheless have been a long process. It should be noted in passing that *APalph* may well have also undergone a similar process of evolution, for it now contains material that the editors of *APsys* appear not to have known. But these are thorny problems; there appears to have been hardly anything fixed about the apophthegmatic texts, with the exception, that is, of the alphabetic system in one case and the twenty-one heads in another. "The philological problem of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* is one of the most complex problems posed by the editing of patristic texts," wrote Père Guy, citing Wilhelm Bousset, who wrote,

[14] Pelagius and John, *Apophthegmata Patrum*, ed. Heribert Rosweyde, in *Vitae Patrum VI* and *VII,* Anvers 1615 and 1623, repr. in *PL* 73:851–1022; *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks*, trans. Benedicta Ward (New York: Penguin, 2003).

[15] Such is the conclusion of Guy, *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum*, *SH* 36 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1962), 182–84.

"The transmission of the Apophthegmatic literature is astonishingly complicated considering the extraordinarily varied nature of the source materials."[16] The difficulties are by no means reduced by the absence of reliable editions of both the alphabetic and the anonymous series.

Fortunately this is no longer the case so far as *APsys* is concerned. Of this there is an excellent critical edition and French translation, the work of the late Father Jean-Claude Guy[17] and (to a certain extent) of Bernard Flusin and Bernard Meunier; the present translation is based entirely on their Greek text. Needless to say, given the instability of the text, the editors had to make some arbitrary choices; these have been neither challenged nor altered in this translation. Yet here, as ever, the translator has to serve two masters. On the one hand, he is bound to express the meaning of the text as precisely as possible; on the other hand, he is obliged to do so in English that is smooth to the ear and easily understood. How far he can compromise in reconciling these two aims is a matter of choice for each translator. If the present writer has offended or confused the English reader, he apologizes; if he has dismayed the Hellenist, he begs forgiveness. His aim was to make the wisdom of the Desert Fathers as widely available as the English language is read. Not all of this book will appear to be wisdom to every one of its readers; some of it may indeed appear to be foolishness, for it speaks of an arcane wisdom to which we may have partly lost the keys. Nevertheless, every reader will find something in the apophthegms of the fathers that will ring true for him or her. For those who, like those fathers, strive to lead the Christ life but "in the world" (as the fathers would have said), the hope is that they too will find in this book abundant "provisions (as it were) for the road to virtue," as does your translator,

John Wortley
Winnipeg, MMXI

[16] Jean-Claude Guy, 7: "Die Überllieferung der Apophthegmata-Literatur ist eine erstaunlich verwickelte, und das in Betracht kommende Quellenmaterial ungemein weitschichtig"; Wilhelm Bousset, *Apophthegmata; Studien zur Geschichte des ältesten Mönchstums* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1923) 1.

[17] Jean-Claude Guy, *Les Apophtegmes des Pères: collection systématique*, SCh 387 (1993), 474 (2003), and 498 (2005). Hereafter *APsys*.

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The translator and his publisher both wish to warmly thank *Sources Chrétiennes* for the generous permission to translate the text of Guy's edition (cited in note 13 above) of the *collection systématique* of apophthegms and to publish it.

JW

Abbreviations

Items found in other collections are identified either by a name and a number (e.g., Arsenios 14) or by N and a number (e.g., N 253). In the former case the reference is to *Apophthegmata patrum, collection alphabetica* [APalph], ed. Jean-Baptiste Cotelier, in *Monumenta Ecclesiae Graecae*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1647), re-ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *PG* 65:71–440, English translation by B. Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975). In the latter case the reference is to the appendix of the above, the so-called anonymous collection of apophthegmata (APanon), first partially edited by Frédéric Nau (hence "N"), "Histoires de solitaires égyptiens," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 12 (1907) through 18 (1913). The first complete edition and translation (by John Wortley) is about to be published by Cambridge University Press.

BHG François Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 3rd ed., 3 vols., *Subsidia Hagiographica* N° 8a (Brussels: 1957); and idem., *Novum auctarium Bibliothecae Hagiographicae Graecae*, *Subsidia Hagiographica* N° 65 (Brussels: 1984).

Disc *Abba Isaiah of Scetis: Ascetic Discourses*, trans. John Chrysavgis and Pachomios Penkett (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2002).

CPG *Corpus Patrum Graecorum*

HL Palladius of Hellenopolis, *Historia Lausiaca*, ed. Cuthbert Butler, in *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, 2 vols (Cambridge: 1898, 1904); ed. G. J. M. Bartelink, trans. Marino Barchiesi, *Palladio, La Storia Lausiaca* (Fondazione Lorenza Valla: 1974); trans. Les sœurs carmelites de Mazille, *Les Moines du désert* (Paris: 1981).

HME Anonymous, *Historia Monachorum in Ægypto*, ed. André-Jean Festugière, *Subsidia Hagiographica* N° 53 (Brussels, 1971); trans. André-Jean Festugière, *Enquête sur les Moines d'Egypte*, in *Les Moines d'Orient* IV/1 (Paris: 1964); trans. Norman Russel, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981).

LXX Septuagint

N (Nau) = APanon

PG *Patrologia Graeca*

PL *Patrologia Latina*

PO *Patrologia Orientalis*

P&J Pelagius and John, trans., *Apophthegmata Patrum*, ed. Heribert Rosweyde, in *Vitae Patrum* VI and VII (Anvers 1615 and 1623); repr. in *PL* 73:851–1022; trans. B. Ward, *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

Pract Evagrius Ponticus, *Practicus*

PS John Moschos, *Pratum Spirituale*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (after Fronto Ducaeus and Jean-Baptiste Cotelier), with the Latin trans. of Ambrose Traversari, *PG* 87:2851–3112; trans. John Wortley, *The Spiritual Meadow* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992; repr. 1996, 2001); trans. Jean Bouchet, *Fioretti des moines d'orient* (Paris: 2006).

S Supplementary items published by Jean-Claude Guy in *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum* (Brussels: 1962; repr. 1984 with corrections).

Glossary

Non-English Words Retained in the Translation

***abba*.** Father, a senior monk but not necessarily an old one; see 15.57.

***accidie* (*akēdia*).** "Sloth, torpor, especially as a condition leading to listlessness and want of interest in life" (*OED*), probably akin to depression.

***agapē*.** Literally "love," used to designate a common meal shared by monks on special occasions (hence "love feast"), possibly originally made possible by some freewill offering.

***amma*.** Mother.

***apatheia*.** Literally "unfeeling"; indifference to physical conditions; a term found rarely in the *Apophthegmata* but common in later monastic writing.

***askēsis*.** Literally "a formation," usually meaning the practice of asceticism; the discipline associated with the monastic way of life.

***askētēs*.** One who practices *askēsis*.

***coenobion,* adj. *coenobitic*.** Here transliterates *koinobion*, "common life," meaning wherever persons live together in community (a convent) under the supervision of a *koinobiarch*, here translated "superior" or rendered *higoumen*, q.v. A place or a community in which monks live together with shared worship, meals, and responsibilities.

***dynamis*.** The healing "power" believed to be given off by holy persons and their relics and effects, as in Mark 5:30.

***higoumen* (*hēgoumenos*).** The head of a monastic community.

***hēsychia* (*hēsuchia*).** Not merely (or necessarily) silence [*siōpē*; see 2.4 and 2.12] but an interior silence characterized by a tranquil acquiescence in the will of God, producing a "profound calm and great peace within" (2.22).

***leviton*.** (That is, "Levite's.") The monk's garment for prayer, usually white.

***logismos*, pl. *logismoi*.** A word of many meanings. It can simply mean one's thinking process, but it can also mean everything that goes on in that process—good, bad, and indifferent—from a mere whim to a serious temptation.

***porneia*.** Any illicit sexual movement of body, mind, or spirit.

***synaxis*, pl. *synaxes*.** Literally "a congregating"; it means an act of worship, either of one or a few monks (the "little *synaxis*," also called "liturgy") or of an entire community (e.g., at weekends and festivals) at a central location. The Holy Eucharist ("Offering") is also called *synaxis*.

English Words Used with Specific Meanings

act of obeisance. A prostration; to throw oneself at somebody's feet.

alienation. Translates Greek *xeniteia* and Latin *perigrinatio*; making oneself a "stranger and sojourner" [1 Pet 2:11], usually in an uninhabited place (but see 4.52).

anchorite (*anachorētēs*)**.** One who withdraws; one who has abandoned "the world" for the desert or (more usually) has left a community to live alone. See 10.172; N 243.

ascetic, asceticism (*askētēs*, *askēsis*)**.** The practitioner and practice of monastic discipline, perceived as a training or formation in travelling the way to perfection.

burnt-faced one (*aithiops*, from which "Ethiopian" derives)**.** A devil or demon.

dried loaf (*paxamas*)**.** "Biscuit," named after the baker Paxamos; a bread roll that has been sun dried or baked hard.

Egypt. Only the *inhabited* part of what is now known as Egypt, mainly the valley of the Nile and its delta region.

elder. Here translates *gerōn*, often misleadingly rendered "old man," but age is not necessarily implied (compare "elder" among North American Indians). An elder is one advanced not so much in age as in experience; hence a senior monk, as opposed to a junior (brother).

expatriation. See **alienation**.

loose talk (*parrhēsia*)**.** "Outspokenness," "familiarity," also in a good sense; "freedom of access" (e.g., to the Deity, as at 1 John 2:28).

Lord-and-master. Translates *despotēs*.

monastery. Here means any place where monks live, from the smallest hermitage to the vast Pachomian establishment.

poverty. Here inadequately translates *aktēmosynē*, literally "without possessions." In the *Apophthegmata* the word means not only the voluntary abandonment of material possessions but, a fortiori, indifference to possessions even when they are accessible.

Rome. In most cases in the *Apophthegmata*: Constantinople, "New Rome."

sorrow for sin. Here translates *katanyxis*, sometimes rendered "compunction."

voluntary exile. See **alienation**.

worldling. "One who is devoted to the interests and pleasures of the world" (*OED*). This obsolete English word has been resurrected to represent the Greek *kosmikos*, a person "of the world" as opposed to one "of the desert" (that is, a "non-monk"), sometimes translated "layman" or "non-clergyman" (although very few monks were clerics); also sometimes translated "secular," but that usually means a cleric who is not a monk—almost no worldlings were clerics.

□ □ □ □

Where words are found in square brackets in the text, these are words that are not found in the Greek but are desirable to make the meaning clear.

The Book of the Elders

Prologue to The Book of the Elders Called Paradise

1. In this book the virtuous asceticism, the wondrous way of life, and the sayings of holy and blessed fathers are recorded to school those who are desirous of successfully pursuing the heavenly way of life and willing to travel the road to the kingdom of heaven by emulating and imitating them.

2. Now it has to be known that the holy fathers who became emulators and teachers of this blessed monastic life, once they were enflamed with divine and heavenly love and had concluded that all that is good and honorable among people was worth nothing, made a great effort above all to do nothing for show. They traveled the way prescribed by Christ while concealing the greater part of their good deeds through extreme humility.

3. So nobody has been able precisely to describe their virtuous life for us. Those who labored most painstakingly at the task have bequeathed to us in writing a few examples of [the elders'] achievements in word and deed, not in order to flatter [the elders] but to rouse those who came after to emulation. At different times they set down these very many of the elders' sayings and good deeds in narrative form, in simple and uncontrived language, with only this one object in view: to benefit many people.

4. But since the relating of many of the things was confused and disordered—their meaning haphazardly

spread throughout the book, which did not help the memory to keep track of it—it caused some difficulty in the reader's mind. That is why we have moved to this arrangement by chapters, for it is able to provide very clear comprehension and ready benefit for those who wish it because a statement unanimously sustained by many virtuous persons makes no small contribution to the advance of virtue.

5. For when Abba Antony says that "humility evades all the snares of the devil" [see 15.3, Antony 7], another [elder] that "humility is a tree of life, raised up on high" [see 15.67, Hyperechios, N 699], another that "humiliation neither angers anyone nor gets angry" [see 21.34; N 115], while yet another says that "if one says to another in humility, 'Forgive me,' he burns the demons" [see 15.98], from all these the mind of the reader receives confidence to make every effort in pursuit of humility. And you will find the same in the other chapters; for the arrangement of the chapters all together and each one of them separately is beneficial in the highest degree to him who undertakes the reading of the book.

6. Since each chapter contains the various sayings of fathers, named and unnamed, one should know that we have first set out in alphabetical order those whose names we were able to discover, unless of course the initial letter has disappeared with the disappearance of the name.

7. The general sequence of the chapters is not arranged without plan or haphazardly; it too is very convenient for him who is willing to apply his mind.

8. For after the exhortations, it begins with the practices most particular to, and primarily for, monks: *hēsychia*, sorrow for sin, self-discipline. Then, going somewhat deeper, it describes the more perfect practices a little at a time, finally proceeding to those that are generally

beneficial, both integrating and perfecting those that have been enrolled in and are components of the common life, which are obedience, humility, love. For what is more beneficial or greater than obedience? What [is] more perfect than love? What [is] more elevated than humility?

9. To these are added some other great things, but these are charismata rather than correct forms of behavior; for revelations and explanations of divine sayings, the workings of miracles and powers would be donatives of God rather than human pursuits. But if someone adds to such things [the practice of] totally alienating himself from men or always going naked or feeding on wild herbs, he will not fall short of what is appropriate. For such practices are set out here so that we might practice them in every way in order to know in what relationship our holy fathers stood with God and with what distinctions he glorified those who were sincerely devoted to him.

10. Providing a final ornament, the entire book concludes with the sayings [*apophthegmata*] of the fathers that teach the task of monks in brief.

11. The chapters are as follows:[1]

i. An Exhortation of Holy Fathers on Advancing toward Perfection 7

ii. Every Effort Should Be Made to Pursue *Hēsychia* 15

iii. Sorrow for Sin [*Katanyxis*, "Compunction"] 25

iv. Self-Control [*Egkrateia*] Should Be Achieved Not Only in the Case of Food but Also in Other Movements of the Soul 38

[1] The arabic numerals have been added for the convenience of the reader.

v. Various Narratives for Security in the Wars Arising against Us from *Porneia* 59

vi. Poverty [*Aktēmosynē*] and That It Is Necessary to Guard against Covetousness 89

vii. Various Narratives Preparing Us for Patience and Courage 98

viii. One Should Do Nothing for Show 123

ix. One Should Guard against Judging Anybody 133

x. Discretion [*Diakrisis*] 143

xi. One Should Ever Be on Watch 189

xii. One Should Pray without Ceasing 216

xiii. One Must Joyfully Practice Hospitality and Show Compassion 224

xiv. Obedience 233

xv. Humility 246

xvi. Forbearance [*Anexikakia*] 289

xvii. Love [*Agapē*] 300

xviii. Those Who Have Second Sight [*Dioratikoi*] 310

xix. Wonder-Working Elders 350

xx. Virtuous Living 357

xxi. Sayings [*Apophthegmata*] of Those Who Grew Old in the Ascetic Life, Briefly Demonstrating Their Supreme Virtue 376

1

An Exhortation of Holy Fathers on Advancing toward Perfection

1. Somebody asked Antony, "By observing which [precept] shall I be well pleasing to God?" The elder answered, "Observe what I am telling you: Always have God before your eyes wherever you go. Whatever you are doing, have the testimony from Holy Scripture to hand. Wherever you are living, do not be in a hurry to move away. Observe these three [precepts] and you will be saved." Antony 3

2. Abba Pambo asked Abba Antony, "What am I to do?" The elder said to him, "Have no confidence in your own righteousness; have no regrets about a past action; get your tongue and your belly under control." Antony 6

3. The blessed Gregory said, "God requires these three things of every person who has received baptism: correct faith of the soul, truth of the tongue, self-control of the body." Gregory of Nazianzus 1

4. Somebody else said that one of the fathers said, "A dry and monotonous diet coupled with love speedily bring the monk to the haven of *apatheia*." Evagrius Ponticus 6; see 17.35

5. He also said, "When one of the monks was informed of the death of his father, he said to the messenger, 'Stop blaspheming, for my father is immortal.'" Evagrius, Pract 95; *HL* 37.13

6. Abba Macarius said to Abba Zacharias, "Tell me, what is the task of the monk?" "You are asking me, father?" he said, and Abba Macarius said, "I have full Zacharias 1

confidence in you, Zacharias my son, for there is one who is goading me to question you." Abba Zacharias said to him, "In my opinion, to coerce oneself in all things, that is [the task] of the monk."

Disc. 23; CS 15:173

7. Abba Isaiah the priest said, "One of the fathers used to say that a person ought before all things to acquire belief in God, a ceaseless yearning for God, guilelessness, not returning evil for evil, mortification and humility, purity, clemency and love for all, submission, gentleness, long-suffering, patience, a desire for God, and [the practice of] constantly calling upon God with a painful heart and genuine love, with a view to not paying attention to what is past but attending to that which is to come, having no confidence in one's own good works and service, and ceaselessly invoking the help of God in the things that happen to one each day."

Disc. 25; CS 15:212

8. A brother asked Abba Isaiah for a saying, and in answer the elder said to him, "If you want to follow our Lord Jesus, observe his word, and, if you are willing for your old man to be crucified with him, until you die, you ought to cut off those who bring you down from the cross. You have to prepare yourself to tolerate being set at naught; to repose the hearts of those who do you wrong; to humble yourself before those who would have dominion over you; to maintain silence of the mouth; and to refrain from judging anybody in your heart."

Disc. 9; CS 15:97

9. He also said, "Toil, poverty, voluntary exile, fortitude, and keeping silent produce humility, and humility effaces many sins. The renunciation of one who does not observe these [practices] is in vain."

Disc. 26; CS 15:214

10. He also said, "Hate everything in the world and repose of the body, for these made you an enemy of God. As a person who has an enemy fights with him, so we ought also to fight against the body to allow it no repose."

11. A brother asked Abba Isaiah about the phrase of the prayer in the Gospel: "What is this 'Hallowed be thy name'?" "This is for the perfect," he answered, "for the name of God cannot be hallowed in us who are dominated by a passion." Disc. 26; CS 15:214

12. They used to say of Abba Theodore of Phermē that he exceeded many in these three points: poverty, asceticism, and fleeing from folk. Theodore of Phermē 1

13. Abba John Colobos said, "Personally, I would like a person to participate in all the virtues. So when you arise at dawn each day, make a fresh start in every virtue and commandment of God with greatest patience, with fear and long-suffering, in the love of God, with all spiritual and physical fervor, and with much humiliation; enduring affliction of the heart and prevention, with much prayer and intercession, with groans, in purity of the tongue and custody of the eyes; being reviled and not getting angry, living peaceably and not giving back evil for evil; not noticing the faults of others; not measuring oneself, but for you to be beneath the whole of creation, having renounced material goods and the things that pertain to the flesh; on a cross, in combat, in poverty of spirit, in determination and spiritual asceticism; in fasting, in repentance, in weeping, in the strife of battle, in discretion, in purity of the soul, in generous sharing, [doing] your manual labor in *hēsychia*, in nightly vigils, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in toils, closing your tomb as though you were already dead, so that death seems to be near to you every day." John Colobos 34

14. Abba Joseph the Theban said there are three things that are precious in the sight of the Lord. When a person is sick and temptations come upon him, he accepts them gratefully. The second is when someone renders all his deeds pure in the sight of the Lord, with no human element in them. The third is when someone is living in Joseph the Theban

submission to a spiritual father and renounces all his own desires.[1]

Cassian 5

15. Abba Cassian recounted of one Abba John, superior of a *coenobion*, that he was great in his lifetime. "When this man was about to die and was migrating to God joyfully and eagerly," he said, "the brothers gathered around him, asking him to leave them some concise and salvific saying as a legacy by which they would be able to advance toward perfection in Christ. But he sighed and said, 'I have never done my own will, nor did I teach anyone to do that which I did not first do myself.'"

Macarius the Great; *PG* 34:232–33

16. A brother asked Abba Macarius the Great about perfection, and in answer the elder said, "A person cannot be perfect if he does not acquire great humility in his heart and in the body, declines to measure himself in any matter but rather places himself in humiliation beneath the whole of creation, and refuses to judge anybody at all except himself alone; unless he endures insult and tears all evil out of his heart, forces himself to be long-suffering, kindly, brotherly, chaste, and self-controlled (for it is written, 'The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force' [Matt 11:12]), seeing what is right with the eyes, maintaining a guard on his tongue, and turning aside from every vain and soul-destroying rumor; there being justice at his hands, purity of heart toward God, and a spotless body; unless he has the remembrance of death before his eyes every day and has renounced all spiritual anger and evil, renounced material goods and the delights of the flesh, renounced the devil and all his works, but has firmly committed himself to God, the universal sovereign, and to all his commandments and is constantly waiting upon God on every occasion, in every matter and every undertaking."

[1] "This person has an extraordinary crown; but I would prefer sickness," adds *APalph*.

17. Abba Mark said, "The law of freedom teaches all truth. Most people read [this law] in the light of what they know, but a few think of it as an analogy for the fulfilling of the commandments. Do not look for its perfection in human virtues, for nobody is found to be perfect in them; its perfection is encrypted in the cross of Christ." Mark the Hermit, *Opuscula* 1.28–29

18. A brother asked an elder, "What good activity is there, that I could practice and live in it?" The elder said, "God knows what is good, but I heard that one of the fathers questioned Abba Nisteros the Great, the friend of Abba Antony, saying to him, 'What good work is there, that I might practice [it]?' and he said to him, 'Are not all undertakings equal? For the Scripture says, "Abraham was hospitable and God was with him" [see Gen 18:2]; Elijah loved *hēsychia* and God was with him; David was humble and God was with him.' So whatever you observe your soul wishing to do for God, do it—and watch over your heart." Nisteros the Great 2

19. Abba Poemen used to say of Abba Nisteros, "Just as with the case of the brazen serpent in the wilderness—anyone of the people who looked at it was healed [see Num 21:9]—so it was with the elder. Possessing all virtue and keeping silence, he would heal everybody." Nisteros the Great 1

20. Abba Poemen said, "Being on the alert, paying attention to oneself, and discretion—these three virtues are the working tools of the soul." Poemen 35

21. He also said, "God gave this rule of life to Israel: to refrain from what is contrary to nature, that is, from anger, bad temper, jealousy, hatred, slandering a brother, and the rest of the things [pertaining] to the old way of life." Poemen 68

22. A brother asked him how a person ought to order his life, and the elder said to him, "Let us look at Daniel; no accusation was found against him other than the way he served his God" [Dan 6:5–6]. Poemen 53

Poemen 60

23. He also said, "Poverty, affliction, and discretion: these are the working tools of the monastic life, for it is written, 'There were these three men: Noah, Job, and Daniel' [Ezek 14:14]. Noah represents indifference to material goods, Job toil, and Daniel discretion. If there are these three activities in a person, God is dwelling in him."

Poemen 66

24. Abba Poemen also said, "If a monk hates two things, he can become free of the world." "What are they?" said the brother to him, and the elder said, "Repose of the flesh and vainglory."

Pambo 8

25. They said of Abba Pambo that when he was dying, at the moment of departure, he said to the holy fathers who were present, "From the time I came to this place in the desert, built my cell and dwelt in it, I do not recall eating bread except what came from my hands, nor do I repent of anything I said until this time. And yet I am going to God as one who has not even begun to serve him."

Sisoēs 43

26. Abba Sisoēs said, "Be of no significance, cast your will behind you, do not worry yourself [see Matt 6:25] about the concerns of the world, and you shall have repose."

Chomai

27. When Abba Chomai was going to die, he said to his sons, "Do not dwell with heretics; do not become acquainted with persons in power. Do not let your hands be open to gather in; let them rather be open to give."

Euprepios 4

28. Speaking about life, a brother asked an elder and the elder said, "Eat hay, wear hay, sleep on hay (meaning: despise everything), and acquire a heart of steel."

Euprepios 5; N 137

29. A brother asked an elder, "How does the fear of God come into the soul?" "If a person has humility, is indifferent to material goods, and refrains from judging, in this way the fear of God comes upon him," the elder said.

30. An elder said, "May fear, humility, shortage of food, and sorrow remain with you." Euprepios 6

31. One of the elders said, "If you hate something, refrain from doing it to anybody else. Do you hate it when somebody speaks ill of you? Then speak no ill of any person. Do you hate it when somebody makes false accusations against you? Then do not accuse anybody falsely. Do you hate it if somebody sets you at naught or insults you or makes off with what is yours or [does] whatever is like that? Then do nothing of that sort to another. For the person who can keep this saying, it will suffice for his salvation." N 253

32. An elder said, "This is the life of the monk: work, obedience, meditation, not judging, not backbiting, not grumbling; for it is written, 'O you that love the Lord, hate the things that are evil' [Ps 96:10]. The life of a monk is to have nothing to do with that which is unjust, not to see evil with one's eyes, not to be a busybody, not to listen to other folks' affairs, to give rather than to take away with one's hands, not to have pride in one's heart nor wicked thoughts in one's mind nor to fill one's belly, but rather to act with discretion in all things. In these the life of the monk consists." N 225

33. An elder said, "He who does not receive all persons as brothers but discriminates, such a one is not perfect."

34. An elder said, "Beseech God to give you sorrow in your heart and humility. Be always attentive to your sins and do not judge others; rather, rate yourself beneath all others. Maintain no friendship with a woman, with a child, or with heretics. Disassociate yourself from loose talk; control your tongue and your belly, [abstaining] from[2] wine. If somebody speaks to you about any matter whatsoever, do not argue with him. If he speaks well, Matoēs 11; N 330

[2] Here Matoēs 11 (but not N 330) adds, "more than a little."

say, 'Yes.' If he speaks badly, say, 'You know what you are talking about,' and do not contend with him about what he says; then your mind will be at peace."

see N 664

35. A brother asked one of the fathers, "What is life?" and in answer he said, "A truthful mouth, a holy body, a pure heart, thoughts that do not wander off to the world, psalm singing with sorrow for sin, living in *hēsychia*, and having nothing in mind other than the expectation of the Lord."

36. An elder said, "Let us practice gentleness and long-suffering, forbearance, and love, for in these the monk consists."

Basil the Great, *Asceticum magnum* 43.1; *PG* 31:1028B

37. He also said, "The definition of *Christian* is the imitation of Christ."

2

Every Effort Should Be Made to Pursue *Hēsychia*

1. Abba Antony said, "Just as fish die if they are on dry land for some time, so do monks who loiter outside their cells or waste time with worldlings release themselves from the tension of *hēsychia*. So we should hasten back to the cell (like the fish to the sea) lest while loitering outside we forget to keep a watch on the inner [self]." Antony 10

2. He also said, "He who stays in the desert in *hēsychia* is released from fighting on three fronts: hearing, speaking, and seeing. He has only one to contend with: the heart."[1] Antony 11

3. When Abba Arsenius was still in the palace, he prayed to God, saying, "Lord, show me the way to be saved," and there came to him a voice saying, "Arsenius, flee from people and you shall be saved." Arsenius 1

4. When the same [elder] had retired into the solitary life, he offered the same prayer again, and he heard a voice saying to him, "Arsenius, take flight, keep silent, and maintain *hēsychia*, for these are the roots of sinlessness." Arsenius 2

5. Abba Mark said to Abba Arsenius, "Why do you run away from us?" The elder said to him, "God knows that I love you, but I cannot be with God and with people. The thousands and tens of thousands above have one Arsenius 13

[1] Some manuscripts read *accidie* for "heart" (*kardias* / *akēdias*).

will, but people have many wills, so I cannot forsake God and come among people."

Arsenius 7 6. One day the blessed archbishop Theophilus visited Arsenius together with an official; the archbishop asked that they might hear a saying from him. After remaining silent for a little while, the elder answered them, "If I say something to you, will you observe it?" They agreed to observe it. Then the elder said to them, "Wherever you hear Arsenius is, do not come near."

Arsenius 8 7. Another time the archbishop wanted to visit him; first he sent to see whether the elder would open [his door. Arsenius] made it clear to him, "If you come, I will open to you; and if I open to you, I open to everybody—and then I am not staying here any longer." When he heard that, the archbishop said, "If I am going there to chase him away, I will not go to the holy one anymore."

Arsenius 25 8. Abba Arsenius once visited a place where there were reeds, and they were moved by the wind. The elder said to the brothers, "What is that disturbance?" and they said to him, "It is the reeds." The elder said to them, "Indeed, if somebody is living in *hēsychia* but hears the sound of a sparrow, his heart does not have the same *hēsychia*; how much more so you who have the disturbance of these reeds!"

Arsenius 21 9. They used to say of him that his cell was two miles away and he did not readily come out, for there were others who attended to his needs. But when Scete was devastated, he came out weeping and saying, "The world has lost Rome, the monks [have lost] Scete."

Arsenius 28 10. Once when Arsenius was living at Canopus, an exceedingly rich, God-fearing maiden of senatorial rank came from Rome to see him. Archbishop Theophilus received her [as his guest], and she entreated him to persuade the elder to receive her. He went to him and entreated him, saying, "So-and-so of senatorial rank came

from Rome, and she wants to see you," but the elder would not agree to meet her. She, however, when this was reported to her, ordered the beasts to be saddled, saying, "I am trusting in God that I shall see him. There are many folk in our city, but I came to see a prophet." By divine providence, he happened to be outside the cell when she arrived in the environs of the cell. She fell at his feet when she saw him, but he angrily raised her up and looked her up and down, saying to her, "If you want to see my face, take a look," but she was ashamed to look him in the face. The elder said to her, "Have you not heard of my deeds? Do you have to see them? How dare you undertake such a voyage? Do you not realize you are a woman and ought never to go abroad? Or was it so that you can say to the other women when you return to Rome, 'I saw Arsenius,' and turn the sea into a highway for women coming to me?" She said, "If it be the will of God, I will not allow anybody to come here; but do pray for me and ever be mindful of me." In answer he said to her, "I am praying to God that he might expunge the memory of you from my heart." On hearing that, she went out deeply troubled. When she came to the city, from her grief she fell into a fever, and it was reported to the archbishop that she was ill. He came to her and begged of her that he might learn what the matter was. Said she to him, "Would that I had not come here, for I said to the elder, 'Be mindful of me,' and he said to me, 'I am praying to God that the memory of you be expunged from my heart,' and look: I am dying of grief!" "Do you not realize that you are a woman," the archbishop said to her, "and that it is through women that the enemy does battle with the saints? This is why the elder said [that], for he is praying for your soul all the time." In this way she was healed in her mind; she went back home rejoicing.

11. Some elders once came to Arsenius and entreated him to speak a word to them about those living in *hēsychia* who encounter nobody. The elder said to Arsenius 44

them, "While a maiden is in her father's house, many want to be her fiancé, but if she starts going out, she does not please everybody. Some look down on her, others praise her; she is not held in the same esteem as formerly when she was hidden. So it is with the soul: if it begins to spread itself out, it cannot command the confidence of all."

Diadochus CPG 6106 gn. 70

12. Abba Diodochos said, "Just as the heat quickly escapes outside if the doors of the bathhouse are continuously open, so it is with the soul when it wants to do a lot of conversing. Even if the conversation is good sometimes, its own heat dissipates through the gate of speech. So silence at the appropriate time is a good thing, being nothing other than the mother of wisest thoughts."

Doulas 1

13. Abba Doulas said, "If the enemy is coercing us to abandon *hēsychia*, let us not listen to him at all, for there is nothing like it. And going without food is comparable with it in an alliance against him, conferring sharpness on the inward eyes."

Doulas 2

14. He also said, "Cut off your relations with the multitude lest your mind become caught up in circumstances and disturb the mode of your *hēsychia*."

Isaiah 21.3

15. A brother asked Abba Isaiah, "How does one maintain *hēsychia* in the cell?" The elder answered, "To maintain *hēsychia* in the cell is to thrust oneself into the presence of God and, to the best of one's ability, to withstand every *logismos* sowed by the enemy, for that is to flee from the world." The brother said, "What is the world?"and the elder replied, "The world is distraction by affairs; the world is to perform what is contrary to nature and to satisfy one's own desires of the flesh; the world is to think that one is remaining in this age; the world is to care for the body rather than for the soul and to boast of what you are leaving behind. I did not say

this on my own authority; it is the apostle John who says this: 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world'" [1 John 2:15].

16. He also said, "A person living in *hēsychia* must investigate himself all the time as to whether he has evaded those in the air who would detain him and whether he has become free of them while still going about in the body. For if he is in subjection to those, he cannot be in *hēsychia* yet." Isaiah 26.1

17. A brother asked him, "What does one living in *hēsychia* need to do?" And he said, "One living in *hēsychia* needs these three things: to fear God without ceasing, to intercede with patient endurance, and not to release his heart from being mindful of God." Isaiah 26.3

18. They said of Abba Isidore the priest that he used to take refuge in the inner cell when a brother went to him. The brothers said to him, "What are you doing, Abba Isidore?" and he said, "The wild animals who take refuge in their dens are saved." He said this for the benefit of the brothers.

19. A brother visited Abba Moses at Scete, asking him for a saying. The elder said to him, "Go and stay in a cell; your cell will teach you everything." Moses 6

20. Abba Moses said, "A person who flees from people is like a bunch of ripe grapes, but he who is with people is like an unripe grape." Moses 7

21. Abba Mark said, "He who would pass over the intelligible ocean is long-suffering, humble, watchful, and self-controlled. If he is coerced to go onto it without these four [qualities], he disturbs his heart but cannot pass over."

He also said, "*Hesychia* is beneficial, having nullified the vices, and if, as an aid to *apatheia*, it takes along these four virtues in addition to prayer, there is no more speedy a way."

He also said, "There is no *hēsychia* of the mind without flight from the body and no breaking down of the wall between them without *hēsychia* and prayer."

22. He also said, "*Hesychia* is good for this reason: because it does not see that which is harmful and the mind does not absorb what it did not see. That which is not lodged in the mind does not stir a memory through imagination; that which does not stir the memory does not excite the passion, and when the passion is not excited, there is profound calm and great peace within."

Nil 9

23. Abba Nil said "He who is devoted to *hēsychia* remains invulnerable to the darts of the enemy, but he who is involved with multitudes is continually getting wounded.[2] For irascibility, when it is at rest, becomes more gentle; and desire, when it is in *hēsychia*, becomes accustomed to react more mildly in accordance with reason. When not being stirred up, every passion simply progresses gently to what is more moderate and later completely ceases, in time forgetting its own activity; and then there remain unimportant memories of things since the passionate disposition has withdrawn."

Poemen 43

24. Abba Poemen said, "The beginning of evils is distraction."

Poemen 59

25. He also said, "To flee from the things of the body is a good thing; for the person who is close to the war against the body is like somebody standing above a very deep pit. Whenever it seems fit to the enemy, he easily throws the person down. But if he is some distance from bodily matters, he is like one far removed from the pit, so that even if the enemy drags him along to throw him down, even while he is dragging and coercing him, God sends him help."

[2] Nil 9 ends here.

26. Abba Abraham, the disciple of Abba Sisoēs, said to the latter, "You have aged, father; let us go a little nearer to where there is habitation." Said Abba Sisoēs to him, "Let us go where there is no woman." His disciple said to him, "And where is there a place where there is no woman, other than the desert?" so the elder said, "Then take me to the desert." Sisoēs 3

27. Amma Synklētikē said, "There are many in mountains acting like city dwellers who are perishing and many in cities doing the deeds of the desert who are being saved. For it is possible to be alone with one's spirit while in the company of many and also to have one's thoughts with crowds even when one is alone." *PG* 28:1438A

28. An elder said, "A monk ought to acquire *hēsychia* for himself in order to be able to count it as nothing even if he suffers physical damage." N 153

29. Somebody told about three friends, members of a religious philanthropic society, who became monks. The first one chose to pacify those who were in conflict, in accordance with the saying, "Blessed are the peacemakers" [Matt 5:9]; the second one [elected] to visit the sick, but the third went off to practice *hēsychia* in the desert. Much as the first labored to allay the contentions of people, he was unable to heal them all. Afflicted with *accidie*, he came to the one who was serving the sick and found him despairing of fulfilling the commandment [cf. Matt 25:26]. The two of them came to an agreement and went to visit the hermit. They told him of their affliction, begging him to tell them what *he* had successfully accomplished. After a brief silence, he poured water into a bowl and said to them, "Look carefully at the water," for it was disturbed. Then, after a little while, he said to them again, "Now look carefully [and see] how the water is stilled," and as they looked at the water, they saw their faces as in a mirror. Then he said to them, "It is like that too for somebody amidst people; he cannot N 134

see his own sins for the tumult; but when he practices *hēsychia*, especially in the desert, then he sees his own shortcomings."

30. An elder said, "He who would stay in cell, let him have nothing to do with anybody, least of all with somebody who might do him wrong."

N 703 31. An elder said, "He who has Jesus close to him and talks with him does well not to bring anybody into his cell."

N 424 32. A great elder came to the river and, finding a placid [*hesychazōn*] reed bed, he settled there. Cutting some shoots from the river, he would braid a rope and then throw it into the river. He went on doing this until people came and saw him; then he went away. He did not work because he needed to but for the toil and for *hēsychia*.

N 463 33. An elder said, "In the same way that no plant whatsoever grows up on a well-trodden highway, not even if you sow seed, because the surface is trodden down, so it is with us. Withdraw from all business into *hēsychia* and you will see things growing that you did not know were in you, for you were walking on them."

N 464 34. One of the saints said, "It is impossible for a man to experience the sweetness of God as long as he is experiencing the sweetness of the world. But if, on the other hand, he tastes the sweetness of God, he will hate the world, as it is written, 'No man can serve two masters' [Matt 6:24]. We too are unable to enjoy the sweetness of God as long as we long for human company and bodily repose. This is what I say: if a person remains in his cell under the discipline of silence [*siōpē*], dedicating himself wholeheartedly to prayer and work, he can be saved in this age."

35. A brother asked an elder, "What is *hēsychia* and what good does it do?" The elder said to him, "*Hēsychia* is remaining in a cell with understanding and fear of

God, refraining from rancor and arrogance. That kind of *hēsychia* is the mother of all virtues and protects the monk from the fiery darts of the enemy, not allowing him to be wounded by them.

O *hēsychia*! The advancement of those who dwell alone.

O *hēsychia*! The ladder to heaven.

O *hēsychia*! The way to the kingdom of heaven.

O *hēsychia*! Mother of sorrow for sin.

O *hēsychia*! Patron of repentance.

O *hēsychia*! Mirror of offenses, showing a person his shortcomings.

O *hēsychia*! That does not hinder tears and sighs.

O *hēsychia*! That lightens up the soul.

O *hēsychia*! Mother of gentleness.

O *hēsychia*! Concomitant of humility.

O *hēsychia*! That brings one to a peaceable disposition.

O *hēsychia*! That converses with angels.

O *hēsychia*! That enlightens the way of the mind.

O *hēsychia*! Espoused to fear of God, inquisitor of *logismoi*, and toiling together with discernment.

O *hēsychia*! Mother of all good, the foundation of fasting, a bridle for the tongue and a barrier to gluttony.

O *hēsychia*! School of prayer, school of reading.

O *hēsychia*! Calm of *logismoi* and a sheltered harbor.

O *hēsychia*! That importunes God, a weapon of the young that maintains a state of mind for which one need not repent and that preserves untroubled those who are desirous of remaining in their own cells.

O *hēsychia*! The yoke that is easy and the burden that is light [Matt 11:30], conferring repose and support on the one who is supporting you.

O *hēsychia*! Delight of heart and soul.

O *hēsychia*! Exclusively concerned for that which is its own and speaking to Christ, ever having death before its eyes.

O *hēsychia*! A bridle for the eyes, the hearing, and the tongue.

O *hēsychia*! Looking for the coming of Christ by day and by night and keeping the lamp from going out [Matt 21:1-13]. In your longing for him you are ever singing the words, 'My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready' [Ps 56:8].

O *hēsychia*! That restrains boasting and supplies weeping in place of laughter to the one who possesses you.

O *hēsychia*! Mother of devotion.

O *hēsychia*! Enemy of shamelessness and hater of loose talk, ever looking for the coming of Christ.

O *hēsychia*! Prison of passions.

O *hēsychia*! The field of Christ bringing forth good harvests.

Yes brother, acquire this, being mindful of death."

3

Sorrow for Sin
[*Katanyxis,* "Compunction"]

1. Abba Antony said, "With fear of God before our eyes, let us ever be mindful of death. Let us hate the world and all that is in it. Let us hate all physical repose. Let us renounce this life so we can live for God, for he will expect that of us on the Day of Judgment. Let us hunger and thirst, endure nakedness, keep watch, lament, and sigh in our hearts. Let us examine ourselves [to see] whether we have become worthy of God. Let us love affliction so we can find God. Let us despise the flesh so that our soul can be saved." Antony 33

2. He also said, "While staying in the cell, collect your mind; remember the day of death; behold the subsequent decomposition of the body; consider the misfortune; accept the pain; condemn the vanity of the world; be attentive to due proportion and zeal that you might be able ever to remain in the same intended *hēsychia* without weakening. Keep in mind, too, the state of things in Hades and think what it is like for the souls who are therein: in what most bitter silence, amidst what most horrid groaning, in what great fear and agony, in what apprehension as they anticipate the unrelenting torment or the eternal and internal weeping. But remember too the day of resurrection and of [our] appearing before God." Evagrius 1

3. They used to say of Abba Arsenius that all his life long, when he was sitting, working with his hands, he had a rag on his lap on account of the tears falling from his eyes. Arsenius 41

Ammonas 1

4. A brother asked Abba Ammonas, "Utter a saying for me." The elder said, "Go and frame your mind the way the evildoers who are in prison do, for they are asking people, 'Where is the governor and when is he coming?' and weeping in expectation. This is how the monk should pay heed all the time and be reproaching his soul, saying, 'O me! How can I stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and how can I speak in my defense?' If you deliberate like this all the time, you can be saved."

Evagrius 1

5. Abba Theodore said, "When you are sitting in your cell, focus your mind and remember that you are to appear before God. Imagine that fearful and terrifying judgment, then add to it what is in store for sinners: shame in the presence of God and his Christ and of angels, archangels, powers, and all people, all the punishments, 'the fire that is not quenched' and the 'worm that dies not' [Mark 9:48], Tartarus, darkness, and above all these, 'the gnashing of teeth' [Matt 8:12] and the fears and the tortures. Then go on and bring forward the good things in store for the righteous: ready access to God the Father and his Christ and to angels, archangels, powers, and the entire community, the kingdom and its gifts, its delight, and its enjoyment. Represent the memory of each of these to yourself; groan and weep over the condemnation of the sinners; put on an appearance of mourning, fearing that you too might be of their number. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad over the good things in store for the righteous; make an effort to delight in these, but be alienated from those others. Take care that the remembrance of these things is never lost to you (whether you are in the cell or out of it), and do not divert your mind from them, in order to escape from filthy and harmful *logismoi* through them."

Elijah 1

6. Abba Elijah said, "I am afraid of three things: when my soul is going to exit the body, when I am going to meet God, and when the sentence is going to be given against me."

7. Abba Isaiah said, "He who is in *hēsychia* must hold fear of God and of meeting with him more immediately than his breath. Insofar as sin holds sway in his heart, fear of God has not yet come upon him." Isaiah 25.6

8. Abba Peter, the disciple of Abba Isaiah, said, "I visited him when he was sick and found him suffering badly. When he saw me sorrowing, he said to me, 'What affliction is it when I have an expectation of repose? Yet fear of that darkest hour grips me, when I am cast away from the face of God and there will be neither anybody to answer for me nor any expectation of repose.'" Isaiah 25.32

9. He also said, "Another time I went to him and found him gravely ill. When he perceived the sorrow of my heart, he said to me, 'At death's door with these disorders, let me be able to be mindful of that bitter hour, for the health of "the flesh of this death" [see Rom 7:24] is no advantage: the body seeks health in order to turn away from God. Does the root of a tree that is watered every day ever die away so that it bears no fruit?'" Isaiah 26.4

10. Abba Peter said, "I asked him, 'What is fear of God?' and he said to me, 'A person who trusts in anybody who is not God, that person does not have fear of God in himself.'" Isaiah 26.4

11. He also said of Communion, "O me! For I am with the enemies of God even while I am making my Communion. What kind of communion do I have with him? I partake of my own judgment and condemnation [see 1 Cor 11:29]. We say this phrase: 'Holy for the holy,' meaning, 'The holy [bread and wine] for the holy people.' So if I am holy, the enemies lack the strength to do anything to me." Isaiah 26.4

12. Abba Isaiah said, "O me, O me! For I did not struggle to save myself. O me, O me! For I did not struggle to purify myself in order to be made worthy of the intervention of the God of mercy. O me, O me! For Isaiah 26.4

I did not struggle to overcome the onslaughts of your enemies so that you might reign over me."

Isaiah 26.4

13. He also said, "O me! For I have been invested with your name, and I am serving your enemies. O me, O me! For I do what God abhors; that is why he is not healing me."

Isaiah 26.4

14. He also said, "O me, O me! For there are those before me who are accusing me of [faults] of which I am aware and unaware, and I am unable to repudiate them. O me, O me! How can I meet my Lord and his holy ones when my enemies do not allow that [even] one of my members is pure in the sight of God?"

Theophilus 5

15. When the blessed Archbishop Theophilus was at the point of death, he said, "Blessed are you, Abba Arsenius, for you were ever mindful of this hour."

John Colobos 9

16. The fathers said that once when the brothers were eating at an *agapē*, one of the brothers laughed at table. Abba John wept when he saw him, saying, "What on earth can that brother have in his heart that he laughed when he should rather have wept, since he is eating at an *agapē*?"

James 3

17. Abba James said, "Just as a lamp in a darkened chamber illuminates it, so the fear of God, if it comes into a person's heart, illuminates him and teaches all the virtues and the commandments of God."

Macarius the Great 12

18. Some of the fathers asked Abba Macarius the Egyptian, "How is it that your body is emaciated both when you are eating and when you are fasting?" The elder said to them, "The stick used to poke the burning twigs is wholly eaten up by the fire. Likewise, if a person cleanses his own mind in the fear of God, the fear of God itself eats up his bones."

Macarius 38

19. They told of Abba Macarius the Great that one day when he was walking around in the desert, he found the

skull of a dead person thrown on the ground. [The elder] prodded it with his palm staff and said, "You, who are you? Answer me!" and the skull spoke to him, saying, "I was the high priest of the pagans who inhabited this place, and you are the spirit-bearing Abba Macarius. Whenever you feel compassion for those in chastisement, they are a little relieved." Abba Macarius said to him, "Relieved in what way?" The skull said to him, "There is as much fire beneath our feet and heads as the sky is distant from the earth. Stationed in the midst of the fire, it is not possible to see each other face to face, being glued back to back. When you pray for us, one has a partial glimpse of the face of the other." Weeping, the elder said, "Sad was the day in which a person was born if this is the relief of the chastisement!"[1] The elder said to him again, "Is there another punishment worse than this one?" The skull said to him, "There is a greater punishment beneath us." [The elder] said to him, "And who is in it?" The skull said to him, "We who did not see God are at least a little pitied; but they who saw God but denied him and did not do his will, they are the ones beneath us." After that the elder took the skull, buried it in the ground, and went his way.

Macarius 34

20. The elders at the Mount of Nitria once sent to Abba Macarius at Scete with a request. They said to him, "To prevent all the people from enduring a journey to you, we beg you to present yourself here so that we can see you before you migrate to the Lord." When he presented himself at the mountain, all the people congregated around him. The elders were asking him

[1] The foregoing passage appears to have been somewhat deranged. In *APalph* it reads, "As high as the heaven is from the earth [see Isa 55:9], that is how much fire there is beneath us, and we are stationed in the fire from feet to head. No one can see the face of another, for the face of each one is glued to the back of another. So when you pray for us, one has a partial glimpse of the face of the other." Weeping, the elder said, "Sad was the day in which a person was born!"

to utter a saying for the brothers, but, in tears, he said, "Let us weep, brothers, and let our eyes pour forth tears before we go where our tears will burn our bodies." They all wept and fell on their faces, and they all said, "Pray for us, father."

21. Abba Moses said, "Let those of us who have been worsted by a bodily passion not be negligent in repenting and feeling sorrow for ourselves before the sorrow for the judgment overtakes us."

22. He also said, "A person acquires the virtues through tears, and through tears comes the forgiveness of sins. So when you weep, do not raise the voice of your sighing. 'Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing' [Matt 6:3]. The 'left hand' is vainglory."

Dioscorus 2

23. Abba Poemen was asked by a brother, "My *logismoi* are troubling me and not letting me be concerned about my sins; they are making me pay attention to the shortcomings of my brother." Abba Poemen told him how Abba Dioscorus was in the cell weeping over himself while his disciple was in another cell. The disciple went to the elder in the first cell and found him weeping. He said to him, "What are you weeping for, father?" He said to him, "For my sins, my son." Said the brother to him, "You do not have sins, father." The elder said to him, "Indeed, if one were permitted to see my sins, four others would not be enough to weep with me for them." Hence Abba Poemen said, "That is what a person who knows himself is like."

Poemen 26

24. Once when Abba Poemen was traveling into Egypt, he saw a woman sitting in a sepulcher, weeping bitterly, and he said, "If all the delights of this world come, they will not restrain her soul from sorrow. The monk should have sorrow in himself all the time, like that."

Poemen 72

25. Another time he was passing through the region of Diolocos together with Abba Anoub, and when they

came to the sepulchers they saw a woman beating [her breast] and weeping bitterly. They stopped and watched her; then, moving on a little, they met someone, and Abba Poemen asked him, "What ails that woman that she is weeping bitterly?" He said to him, "Her husband has died, and [so have] her son and her brother." In response Abba Poemen said to Abba Anoub, "I tell you, unless a person puts to death all the desires of the flesh and acquires that sorrow, he cannot be a monk. Her entire life and thought are in sorrow."

26. Abba Poemen also said, "Sorrow works in two ways: it labors and protects" [see Gen 2:15]. Poemen 39

27. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "What am I to do?" The elder said to him, "At the time of God's visitation, what do we have to worry about?" "About our sins," the brother said to him, and the elder told him, "So then let us go into our cells and remain there, recalling our sins, and the Lord will go with us in all things." Poemen 162

28. A brother asked him, "What am I to do?" and he said to him, "When Abraham entered the Promised Land, he bought himself a sepulcher, and through the tomb he inherited the land" [see Gen 23:4-10]. The brother said to him, "What is 'a tomb'?" and the elder said, "A place of weeping and sorrow." Poemen 50

29. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "What am I to do about my sins?" The elder said to him, "One who wishes to release himself from sins is released from them by weeping."

30. He also said, "Weeping—that is the way Scripture and our fathers delivered to us, saying, 'Weep! For there is no other way but that one'" [see Jas 4:9]. Poemen 119

31. Abba Isaac visited Abba Poemen, and as they were sitting together, he saw that he was in a trance. He besought him saying, "Where is your *logismos*, Abba?" Poemen 144

"There where Saint Mary was," the elder said. "She was weeping at the cross of the Savior [see John 19:25], and I wished to weep all the time."

Pambo 4

32. The blessed Athanasius invited Abba Pambo to come down from the desert to Alexandria. He came down and, seeing a woman of the theatre there, broke down in tears. When those who were there sought to know why he wept, he said, "Two things moved me: one was her destruction, the other that I do not make such an effort to please God as she makes to please shameful men."

Silvanus 2

33. Once when Abba Silvanus was sitting with some brothers, he went into a trance and fell on his face. After some considerable time, he got up and wept. The brothers besought him, "What is the matter, father?" but he remained silent and went on weeping. When they obliged him to speak, he said, "I was snatched away to the judgment, and I saw many wearing our habit going off to punishment and many worldlings going off into the kingdom." The elder was sorrowing and would not come out of his cell, and if he was obliged to come out, he would hide his face in his cowl, saying, "Why would I want to see this transitory light that offers no advantage?"

Synklētikē 1

34. The blessed Synklētikē said, "It is a struggle and great toil at first for those who approach God, but then it is unspeakable joy. Just as they who want to start a fire are engulfed in smoke and reduced to tears at first and in this way attain the desired object, so too—for it says, 'Our God is a consuming fire' [Heb 12:29]—must we start the divine fire within ourselves with tears and toil."

35. Abba Hyperechius said, "The monk transforms the night into day by keeping watch and assiduously persisting in prayers. Goading his heart, he pours forth tears and calls forth mercy from on high."

36. Some brothers visited Abba Felix and had some worldlings with them. They besought him to utter a saying for them, but the elder kept silent. When they continued beseeching, he said to them, "You want to hear a saying?" "Yes, Abba," they said, so the elder said, "There is no saying now. When the brothers used to ask the elders and would do what they said to them, God provided them with [knowledge of] how to speak. But nowadays when they ask but do not do what they hear, God has taken away the grace from the elders, and they do not find anything to say, since there is no one to perform it." The brothers sighed when they heard this and said, "Pray for us, Abba." Felix

37. They told of Abba ōr and Abba Theodore that when they were puddling clay for a cell, they said to each other, "If God visits us now, what will we do?" They left the clay and retreated into their cells in tears. Ōr 1

38. An elder told how a youth who wanted to retreat [into the desert] was impeded by his mother. But he did not abandon his project, saying, "I want to save my soul." Much as she tried to stand in his way, she was not able, so, in the end, she let him go. Off he went and lived alone in a disorderly way, wasting his life away. N 135

Now it came about that his mother died; then, some time later, he himself became gravely ill. He fell into a trance and was whisked away to the judgment; there he found his mother with those who were being judged. She was astonished when she saw him. "What is this, my child?" she said. "Have you too been condemned to come to this place? Where are the words you used to say: 'I want to save my soul'?"

Bowled over by what he heard, he stood there dejected, having nothing to say in reply to her. Then, by the providence of God, the lover of folk, after seeing those things, he made a recovery from the illness that was afflicting him. Reckoning that a visitation like that

must have been sent from God, he shut himself up and stayed there**,** concerning himself with his own salvation, repenting and weeping over the things he did previously in a disorderly way. Such was his sorrow for sin that many begged him to relax it a little, lest he do himself some harm by his excessive weeping. But he would not be comforted: "If I could not endure the reproach of my mother," he said, "how then am I to endure being put to shame before Christ and his angels on the Day of Judgment?"

N 136 39. An elder said, "If it were possible, at the coming of God after the resurrection, for people's souls to die from fear, the whole world would die from terror and bewilderment. What a sight it would be to see the heavens torn open, God revealed in anger and indignation, and innumerable armies of angels, and to observe the whole of humanity together! We should therefore live as those who are required by God to render a daily account of our way of life."

N 138 40. A brother asked an elder, "How is it that my heart is hard and that I do not fear God?" The elder said to him, "I think that a man will acquire fear of God if he maintains [the habit] of reproaching himself in his heart." The brother said to him, "What does 'reproach' mean?" Said the elder, "It is that a man reproves his soul in every situation, saying to himself, 'Keep in mind that you have to meet God.' Say this too: 'What have I to do with anybody?' I think that if one perseveres in this frame of mind, the fear of God will come upon him."

N 139 41. When an elder saw somebody laughing, he said to him, "We are going to have to render an account of the whole of our own life before heaven and earth, and you are laughing?"

N 140 42. An elder said, "Just as we carry our own shadow around everywhere, so must we have weeping and sorrow for sin with us wherever we are."

43. A brother asked an elder, "Abba, utter a saying for me." Said the elder to him, "When God struck Egypt, there was not a house without sorrow" [see Exod 12:30].

44. A brother asked another elder, "What am I to do?" N 141
"We must weep all the time," the elder said to him. "It once happened that one of the elders died and then regained consciousness a considerable time later. We asked him, 'What did you see there, Abba?' With tears in his eyes he told us, 'I heard a sound of weeping from those who were saying unceasingly, "O me, O me."' So ought we to be saying all the time."

45. A brother asked an elder, "How is it that my soul N 142
yearns for tears the way I hear the elders [shed them], yet no tears arrive and my soul is distressed?" "The children of Israel were forty years entering the Promised Land [see Heb 11.9]," the elder said to him. "Tears are the Promised Land. If you enter it, you will no longer be afraid of battle. It is the will of God that the soul be distressed in that way, so that it might ever yearn to enter into that land."

46. An elder said, "Remaining in your cell, keep God in mind all the time, and the fear of God will encircle you. Cast everything that is sinful and all evil out of your soul in order to find repose."

47. He also said, "He who has acquired fear of God is in possession of a treasure filled with good things; for the fear of God saves the person from sin."

48. Unaware that his disciple was listening, an elder began groaning bitterly in the night, gnashing his teeth, and weeping. When he was comforted by his disciple, he said, "I was led away and I saw what affliction the souls of the sinners are in, there in Hades, and I can no longer be comforted."

49. There was a devout virgin living in a city whose N 460
neighbor was a soldier. Once when her mother was out,

the soldier assaulted the maiden and raped her. After that, she took off her virgin's habit and sat on a mat weeping, having torn up even the clothes she was wearing. When her mother came, she told her what had happened. For many days the maiden sat there sorrowing in that way. Afterward, when some virgins and clergy heard [what had happened], they came to her and began saying, "Put the virgin's habit on; you are not responsible for the sin," but she would not be persuaded. "God has cast me off," she said. "How can I put on again the habit of the God who does not want me? Could God not have prevented the affront? If he saw that I was unworthy of the habit, then so I am remaining." And until the day she died, she continued weeping and lamenting in salutary grief with excessive sorrow for sin.

50. A brother asked an elder, "How is it that my soul loves impurity?" The elder said to him, "The soul desires the passions, but it is the Spirit of God who takes it in hand. We should weep over our own sins and impurities. Did you notice how the Lord called to Mary when she stooped down at the sepulcher and wept [see John 20:11-16]? That is how it will be for the soul."

N 54 51. Somebody saw a young monk laughing and said to him, "Do not laugh, brother, for you are driving the fear of God away from you."

52. A monk who was a linen weaver was spinning [yarn] in his cell. He said, "I have waited for a long time expecting death as I released the shuttle, in doubt whether I would live until I drew it back."

N 58 53. Another elder said, "I sew away, and at each piece of sackcloth I set death before my eyes before I repeat [the action]."

54. An elder said, "Be anxious for the salvation of your souls, brothers, since the Day of Judgment is terrible

and bitter. Give your souls and receive spirit, the Holy [Spirit], that is."

55. One of the saints said [this] about loose talk: "Loose talk is like a burning wind, destroying the fruits of the monk. Now hear about laughter: laughter throws out the blessedness of sorrow. Laughter does not construct, does not protect; it destroys and demolishes what has been constructed. Laughter grieves the Holy Spirit, is of no benefit to the soul, and corrupts the body. Laughter chases off the virtues; it has neither remembrance of death nor contemplation of the punishments."

56. One of the elders said, "The beginning of the ruination of a monk is laughter and loose talk. When you see yourself [indulging] in these, O monk, know that you are in the depths of evil. Do not leave off beseeching God to deliver you from this death [see Rom 7:24]. Laughter and loose talk escort the monk to disgraceful passions, not only the young ones but the older ones too. Laughter and loose talk are the downfall of the monk."

4

Self-Control [*Egkrateia*] Should Be Achieved Not Only in the Case of Food but Also in Other Movements of the Soul

Antony 18

1. Some brothers from Scete visited Abba Antony. When they got into a boat to go to him, they found another elder, and he too was desirous of going there, but the brothers were not acquainted with him. While they were sitting in the boat, they were speaking sayings of the fathers and from the Scripture, then again about their handwork, but the elder remained completely silent. When they came to the anchorage, it emerged that the elder too was on his way to Abba Antony. When they got to him, he said to them, "Nice company you found in that elder," and he said to the elder, "Nice brothers you found with you, Abba." The elder said to him, "They are nice, but their courtyard has no gate. Whoever wishes enters the stable and unties the ass." He said this because they were speaking whatever came into their mouths.

Arsenius 14

2. Abba Daniel used to say that Abba Arsenius would spend the whole night watching, and toward dawn, when he naturally wanted to lie down, he would say to sleep, "Come on then, wicked slave," and he would snatch a little, sitting down—and would get up straight away.

Arsenius 15

3. Abba Arsenius used to say, "It is enough for a monk to sleep one hour if he is a combatant."

4. Abba Daniel used to say of him, "He stayed with us for so many years, and we used to make only one *thallion*[1] of grain a year for him, and we would eat from it when we visited him. Arsenius 17

5. He also said that he only changed the water [for steeping] the palm leaves once a year; he just added to it. He used to braid rope and stitch it until the sixth hour. The elders asked him, "Why do you not change the water of the palm leaves, for it stinks?" He said to them, "I have to accept that stench in place of the incense and myrrh I enjoyed in the world." Arsenius 18

6. He also said that when he heard that every manner of fruit was ripe, he said of himself, "Bring me [some]," and he tasted a little, once only, from them all, giving thanks to the Lord. Arsenius 19

7. They used to say of Abba Agathon that he put a stone in his mouth for three years until he maintained silence. Agathon 15

8. Abba Agathon was once travelling with his disciples, one of whom found a little green plant by the wayside and said to the elder, "Do you want me to take it, Father?" The elder looked at him in wonder and said, "Did you put it there?" "No," the brother replied, and the elder said, "So how can you want to take what you did not put?" Agathon 11

9. One of the elders visiting Abba Achilles saw him spit blood from his mouth. "What is this, Father?" he asked him, and the elder said, "It is something a brother said that had distressed me, and I struggled not to make it known. I besought God for it to be taken away from me; then what he had said became blood in my mouth. I spat it out and attained repose, forgetting the distress." Achilles 4

10. Abba Achilles once came to the cell of Abba Isaiah at Scete and found him eating; he was putting salt and Achilles 3

[1] A dry measure of uncertain dimensions.

water in a dish, but he hid the dish when he saw the elder. Seeing that he had hidden it behind the rope, [Abba Achilles] said to him, "Tell me what you were eating," but he said, "Forgive me, Abba; I was cutting palm fronds, and, coming back in the heat of the day, I put a morsel[2] [of bread] in my mouth with some salt, but my throat was dry from the heat and the morsel would not go down. For that reason I was obliged to put a little water with the salt so that, in this way, I might be able to swallow; please forgive me." But the elder said, "Come and see Isaiah eating soup at Scete! If you want to eat soup, go to Egypt."

Ammoes 3

11. They used to tell of Abba Ammoes that he was sick in bed for many years and yet he never let his *logismos* heed his inner cell to see what it contained, for many things were brought for him on account of his illness. When John his disciple went in and came out, he would shut his eyes in order not to see what it was the brother was doing, for he knew that he was a trustworthy monk.

Benjamin 2

12. Abba Benjamin, the priest at The Cells, said, "When we visited an elder at Scete, we wanted to serve him some oil, and he said to us, 'Look, there lies the small vessel [of oil] that you brought me three years ago; it stayed there where you put it.' We were astounded at the elder's way of life when we heard this."

Dioscorus 1

13. They said of Abba Dioscorus of Nachiastis that his bread was made from barley and lentils and that each year he would begin to observe one rule of life, saying, "I will not meet anybody this year," or "I will not speak," or "I will not eat anything cooked," or "I will not eat fruit or fresh vegetables"—and so he did with every activity. When he finished one, he undertook another and did so year by year.

[2] There is a word play here between "morsel" (*psōmos*) and "soup" (*zōmos*).

14. An elder said,[3] "I deny myself pleasures in order to eliminate occasions for being irascible, for I know that he is ever at war with me in connection with pleasures, troubling my mind and expelling my understanding."

15. Epiphanius, the bishop of Cyprus, once sent to Abba Hilarion, inviting him, "Come, so we can see each other before we depart from the body." When he arrived they rejoiced in each other's company. While they were eating, a fowl was brought to them; the bishop took it and gave it to Abba Hilarion, but the elder said to him, "Forgive me, Abba, but I have not been eating flesh since I took the habit." Said Epiphanius to him, "Since I took the habit I have not allowed anybody to sleep who had anything against me, nor did I go to sleep if I had anything against anybody." The elder said to him, "Forgive me; your way of life is greater than mine." Epiphanius 4

16. They used to say of Abba Helladius that for twenty years he never lifted his eyes to see the roof of the church. Helladius 1

17. They used to say of Abba Zēno that walking around in Palestine, he was fatigued and sat down to eat beside a cucumber bed. Then the *logismos* said to him, "Take one cucumber for yourself and eat it; for what is that?" but in reply he said to the *logismos*, "Those who steal go off to be punished; so test yourself here and now whether you can endure punishment." He got up and stood in the burning heat for five days, and after frying himself he said, "I cannot endure punishment." Therefore he said to the *logismos*, "If you cannot, then do not steal and eat." Zēno 6

18. Abba Isaiah said, "Love to be silent rather than to speak; for silence saves up, but speaking fritters away."

19. Abba Theodotus said, "Shortage of bread depletes the body of the monk," but another of the elders has said that keeping vigil depletes the body more. Theodotus 2

[3] *P&J*: "Evagrius quoted an elder, saying . . . ."

John Colobos 3

20. Abba John Colobos said, "If a king wishes to capture a city of the enemy, he first takes control of water and food, and thus the enemy submits to him, reduced by famine. So too with the passions of the flesh: if a person lives in fasting and hunger, the enemy wastes away from his soul."

John Colobos 5

21. He also said, "Travelling up the road to Scete with some rope one day, I saw the camel driver talking and inciting me to get angry; I abandoned the wares and fled."

Isaac of The Cells 4

22. Abba Isaac, the priest of The Cells, said, "I know a brother who was harvesting in a field and wanted to eat an ear of grain. He said to the owner of the field, 'Will you let me eat one ear?' [The owner] was astounded on hearing this and said to him, 'The field is yours, Father, and you ask me?' That was the extent to which the brother was scrupulous."

Isidore the Priest 1

23. They used to say of Abba Isidore the priest that a brother once came to invite him for a meal, but the elder would not allow himself to go, saying, "It was because he was led astray by food that Adam was lodged outside Paradise." Said the brother to him, "Are you afraid to come out of your cell now, then?" but he said again, "Should I not be afraid, my son, since 'the devil, like a roaring lion, is seeking whom he may devour'?"[1 Pet 5:8]. And he often used to say that if a person gave himself to wine drinking, he would not escape the onslaught of the *logismoi*; for, obliged by his daughters, Lot was drunk with wine, and because he was drunk, the devil made easy work of contriving for him to commit a criminal act [see Gen 19:31-35].

Isidore 2

24. A brother asked Abba Isidore, the priest of Scete, "Why do the demons fear you so very much?" The elder said to him, "Since I became a monk, I have been at pains not to allow anger to rise up in my throat."

25. He also said that he was aware of sin in his mind for thirty years and that he had never given in to lust or to anger. Isidore 3

26. Abba Cassian said of a certain Abba John, who became the *higoumen* of monks, that he visited Abba Arsenius, who had been living in the remotest desert for forty years. As [Abba Cassian] had great love for him and, consequently, freedom of speech, he asked him, "In retreat like this for such a long time and not easily disturbed by anyone, what good have you accomplished?" "The sun never saw me eating since I came to live alone," said Abba John, "nor [did it ever see] me being angry." Cassian 4

27. He also said that Abba Moses told us about Abba Serapion, "When I was younger and was living with Abba Theonas, when we were eating I would get up from the meal and be coerced into stealing some dried bread; this I would eat unbeknownst to my *abba*. When I had continued doing this for some time, I was overcome and unable to control myself; but I was condemned only by my own conscience and was ashamed to speak to the elder. Then, by the providence of God, the lover of folk, some people happened to come to the elder [seeking] to benefit, and they were asking him about their own *logismoi*. The elder answered them, "Nothing damages the monks and gratifies the demons so much as hiding *logismoi* from the spiritual fathers." He spoke to them about self-control too. As these things were being said, I reckoned God had informed the elder about me, and, pricked in the conscience, I began to weep and I drew out of my breast the dried bread that I was in the wicked habit of stealing. Casting myself to the ground, I asked forgiveness for what was past and prayed for security in what was to come. Then the elder said, "Even if I remain silent, my son, your confession has set you free from this captivity, and, by declaring your own situation, you

have slain the demon that was wounding you through your silence. Hitherto you made him dominate you by neither contradicting nor refuting him; but henceforth he will have no place in you, for he has been thrown out of your heart." Before the elder had finished speaking, here the coercion appeared in the form of a burning lamp coming out of my breast, and the house was filled with a stench that made those present think it was burning sulphur. Then the elder said, "Look, the Lord has granted a demonstration of my words and of your release by the sign that has taken place."

Longinus 1

28. Abba Longinus was ill once, and he said to himself, "Be ill then and die, but if you ask me for something to eat other than at mealtime, I will not even provide you with the daily ration."

Macarius the Egyptian 10

29. They used to say of Abba Macarius that when he was in the company of brothers he would impose a rule on himself that if there was wine, he would drink for the brothers' sake, but, for one cup of wine, he would not drink water for one day. The brothers gave him wine by way of refreshment, and the elder took it with pleasure in order to torture himself. But his disciple, aware of [his] practice, said to the brothers, "For the Lord's sake, do not give him [wine], for otherwise he is going to afflict himself in the cell." When the brothers learned [this], they did not give him [wine] any more.

Macarius the Egyptian 16

30. Abba Macarius the Great used to say to the brothers at Scete when he was dismissing the congregation, "Flee, brothers!" One of the fathers said to him, "Where can we fly to that is further removed than this desert?" and he placed his finger on his mouth, saying, "Flee from this," and, so saying, he went into his own cell, shut the door, and stayed there.

Macarius the Egyptian 17

31. The same Abba Macarius said, "If you are moved to anger in reproving somebody, you [merely] assuage

your own passion. You are not obliged to destroy yourself even in order to save another."

32. Abba Poemen said, "If Nebuzar-adan the chief cook had not come, the temple of the Lord would not have gone up in flames [see 2 Kgs 25:8ff], which means to say that if the relaxation of gluttony had not come into the soul, the mind would not have fallen in the war with the enemy." Poemen 16

33. They used to say of Abba Poemen that when he was summoned to eat, he would come unwillingly and in tears, in order not to disobey the brothers and grieve them. Poemen 17

34. Some folk told Abba Poemen about a certain monk that he did not drink wine, and he said to them, "Wine has nothing whatever to do with monks." Poemen 19

34 *bis* Again Abba Poemen said, "All bodily repose is an abomination to the Lord."

35. Abba Poemen also said, "The soul is not humbled in anything unless it weans itself off bread."

36. He also said, "If a person remembers the saying that is written, 'By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned' [Matt 12:37], he would choose rather to keep silent." Poemen 42

37. Again the elder said, "A brother asked Abba Pambo if it is a good thing to praise your neighbor, and he said to him, 'It is good to keep silent.'" Poemen 47

38. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "How ought we to [live] in a *coenobion*?" The elder said to him, "He who lives in a *coenobion* ought to see all the brothers as one, keeping a rein on his mouth and eyes; thus he is able to find repose." Poemen S 19

39. Abba Poemen said, "Just as smoke chases out the bees and then the sweetness of their labor is taken, so Poemen 17

does bodily repose chase the fear of God away from the soul and destroys all its good labor."

Poemen 76

40. One of the fathers told this about Abba Poemen and his brothers: "While they were living in Egypt, their mother wanted to see them and was not able to do so. She kept careful watch one day, [hoping] to meet them coming to church, but when they saw her, they turned back and shut the gate in her face. She stood at the gate and cried out, weeping with much wailing. When he heard her, Abba Anoub went in to Abba Poemen and said, 'What are we going to do about that old woman weeping like that at the gate?' Abba Poemen got up and went to the gate; standing inside, he heard her weeping with much wailing, and he said, 'Why are you shouting like that, old woman?' She shouted much more when she heard his voice and said to him, weeping, 'I want to see you, children; what does it matter if I see you? Am I not your mother? Did I not nurse you? Now I am all white haired, and when I heard your voice I was troubled.' The elder said to her, 'Do you want to see us in this world or in the next?' She said to him, 'If I do not see you here, my child, will I see you there?' He said to her, 'If you discipline yourself not to see us here, you shall see us there,' so she went her way rejoicing and saying, 'If indeed I am to see you there, I do not want to see you here.'"

Paul the Great 3

41. They used to say of Abba Paul that he lived through Lent on a measure of lentils and a small pot of water.

Pior 2

42. They used to say of Abba Pior that he used to eat walking around. When somebody inquired why he ate like that, he said, "I do not want to treat food as a vocation but as a pastime."[4] To somebody else who had asked the same question, he replied, "[It is] so that my

[4] There is a wordplay here: *ergon* and *parergon*.

soul may experience no physical pleasure even when I am eating."

43. They used to say of Abba Peter the Pionite, the one of The Cells, that he did not drink wine. When he grew old and the brothers were mixing a little water and wine, they begged him to have some, but he said, "Believe me, I regard this as aromatic wine," and he blamed himself for the mixture. Peter the Pionite 1

44. Once an offering took place on the mountain of Abba Anthony, and a vessel of wine was found there. Taking a small bottle and a cup, one of the elders brought it to Abba Sisoēs and gave it to him, and he drank it. Likewise, he took a second [cup] and drank it. And he offered him a third, but he did not take it, saying, "Stop brother, or do you not know that it is Satan?" Sisoēs 8

45. A brother asked Abba Sisoēs, "What am I to do, for I get myself to church, but often there is an *agapē* and they detain me." The elder said, "This is a difficult one." His disciple, Abraham, said, "If the encounter is on a Saturday or Sunday and a person drinks three cups, that is not a big thing, is it?" And the elder said to him, "Not a big thing provided Satan is not there." Sisoēs 2

46. Abba Sisoēs's disciple often said to him, "Abba, get up; let us eat," and he would say, "Have we not eaten, my son?" He: "No, Father." So the elder would say, "If we have not eaten, bring [it] and let us eat." Sisoēs 4

47. Abba Sisoēs once confidently affirmed, "Take heart; look, for thirty years I have no longer been pleading with God about sin, but I say this when I pray: 'Lord Jesus Christ, protect me from my tongue,' for even until now I fall into sin because of it." Sisoēs 5

48. Abba Silvanus and Zachariah, his disciple, once visited a monastery, and they made them take a little to eat before they went their way. When they came out, Silvanus 1

his disciple found water by the wayside and wanted to drink. Abba Silvanus said to him, "It is a fast day today, Zachariah," but he said, "Did we not eat, Father?" The elder replied, "That eating was out of love [for the brothers]; but let us keep our own fast, my son."

Synklētikē 2 49. The blessed Synklētikē said, "We who have taken up this calling must maintain absolute self-control. It is true that self-control seems to be practiced even by the worldlings; but thoughtlessness is present with it because they sin with their other senses, for they look in an unseemly way and laugh in a disorderly manner."

Synklētikē 3 50. She also said, "Just as the most bitter medicines put poisonous animals to flight, so prayer with fasting expels a sordid *logismos*."

Synklētikē 4 51. She also said, "Do not let the delight in worldly wealth delude you into thinking that it is of any use. They esteem the art of cooking for their pleasure, but you transcend their plentiful supply of victuals by fasting and cheap commodities, for the Scripture says, 'The soul abundantly supplied makes a joke of honeycombs' [Prov 27:7]. Do not stuff yourself with bread, and you will not long for wine."

Tithoēs 2 52. Abba Tithoēs said, "For us, voluntary exile is for a person to be in control of his own mouth."

Hyperechios 1 53. Abba Hyperechios said, "Just as a lion is fearsome to wild asses, so is the well-tried monk to *logismoi* about luxurious living."

Hyperechios 2 54. He also said, "For the monk, fasting is a bridle against sin. He who sets it aside finds himself [to be like] a horse in heat."

55. He also said, "The body of the monk, dried out by fasting, waters a soul from the depths, and the fasting of the monk dries up the channels of delights."

56. He also said, "The monk in control of himself will be honored on earth and will be crowned in heaven before the Most High."

57. He also said, "The monk who is not master of his tongue when he is angry will never master his passions." Hyperechios 3

58. He also said, "Let your mouth not pronounce an evil saying, for a grapevine does not bear thorns."

59. He has also said, "It is good to eat flesh and to drink wine and not to eat the flesh of your brothers in backbiting." Hyperechios 4

60. He also said, "By whispering, the serpent expelled Eve from Paradise, and he who bites back at his neighbor is like it, for he ruins the soul of him who hears and does not keep his own safe." Hyperechios 5

61. An elder said, "The lion is strong, but if (prompted by his belly) he falls into a snare, all his strength is humbled." John Colobos 28

62. An elder said, "Get the better of the demon of gluttony, saying to him, 'Wait, for you will not be famished,' and eat in a seemly way. The more he coerces you, do you all the more eat with restraint. This is how he coerces a person into wanting to eat all the time." N 668

63. Once there was a festival at Scete, and they gave a cup of wine to an elder, but he refused it, saying, "Take this death away from me." When the rest of them who were eating with him witnessed this, neither did they accept [wine]. N 144

64. On another occasion a quantity[5] of new wine was brought there [to The Cells] as a first-fruits offering so one cup could be given to the brethren. When one brother wanted to get away onto the dome, the dome N 148

[5] *Saïtēs* = about nine liters.

collapsed. When they went because of the crash, they found him flat out, and they began to scold him, saying, "Show-off! That was right for you!" But the *abba* took his side, saying, "Leave my son alone. He has done a good thing. As the Lord lives, that dome will not be rebuilt in my time, so that the world may know that the dome fell at Scete on account of a cup of wine."

N 372 65. A brother who was moved to anger against somebody stood in prayer, asking that he might exercise long-suffering toward the brother and that he might survive the temptation [to be angry] unharmed. Straight away he saw smoke coming out of his mouth, and when that happened, his anger was put to rest.

N 161 66. One day the priest of Scete went to the archbishop of Alexandria. On his return to Scete the brethren asked him, "How are things in the city?" "To tell you the truth, brethren," he replied, "I did not see anybody's face other than the archbishop's." They were amazed on hearing this, and they were strengthened in their determination to keep their own eyes from wandering by what he had done.

N 373a 67. An elder said, "The devil is more likely to attack a monk at his weak points, for a habit reinforced by long practice becomes second nature, especially among the slacker ones. Abstain therefore from any food that you seek out because of its savor, especially when you are in good health. And do not eat what you desire; eat what is sent to you by God, giving thanks to him all the time."

N 373b 68. An elder said, "We have suppressed the bread rolls[6] of the monks and all repose, but we have not performed the task of the monks, and yet we think we have become monks. Well then, you monk, struggle boldly to ensure

[6] *Artidia*, a word not found elsewhere, literally means "little loaves."

that you are not wearing a habit that is alien to you. Tell yourself, 'Brother, bear the seal,' meaning humility."

69. One of the elders visited another elder, and he said to his disciple, "Cook a few lentils for us." He did that and also moistened some [dried] bread. They went on talking about spiritual matters until the sixth hour of the next day, at which point the elder said to his disciple again, "Cook a few lentils for us, my son," and he said to him, "I did it yesterday." Then they got up and ate. N 149

70. Another elder visited one of the elders, who boiled a few lentils and said to [the visitor], "Let us offer the little *synaxis*." He recited the entire Psalter, then the other one repeated from memory the two great prophets.[7] The visiting elder departed when dawn broke; they forgot about the food. N 150

71. Once a brother was hungry from the first thing in the morning, but he fought back the *logismos* so as not to eat until the third hour. Then, when it came to the third hour, he forced himself [to wait] until the sixth hour. When it was the sixth hour, he moistened some [dry] bread and sat down to eat, but then he stood up, saying, "Let us wait until the ninth hour." It got to be the ninth hour, and, after he had offered a prayer, he saw the power [of the demon] rising up like smoke out of [the food] that was to hand, and in this way the hunger was put to rest in him. N 145

72. One of the elders fell sick, and being unable to take any food for many days, he was encouraged by his disciple to let a little cake[8] be made for him. He went and prepared it and then brought it for the elder to eat. There was a jar standing there with a little honey in it and another [jar] containing linseed oil that was rancid and N 151

[7] Presumably Isaiah (66 chapters) and Jeremiah (52 chapters).

[8] *Lakention*: meaning unsure; probably *petit four*; something cooked in the cinders.

only used for the lamp. The brother didn't notice and put some of [the rancid oil] on the elder's food. The elder did not say anything when he tasted it but ate it in silence. The brother encouraged him to eat once again, and he did force himself to eat. Then [the brother] gave him a third serving, but he was unwilling to eat, saying, "I really cannot, my son." Trying to encourage him, [the brother] said, "It is good, Abba; look, I will eat with you." When he had tasted it, he realized what he had done. He fell on his face, saying, "O, me! Abba, for I have killed you, and you have inflicted this sin on me by not speaking up." "Do not torment yourself, my son," said the elder, "for you would have put honey [on it] if God had wanted me to eat some honey."

N 152 73. They said of a certain elder that he desired to eat a small cucumber. He took it and hung it up where he could see it. He was not worsted by the desire but rather repented and punished himself for having even desired it.

N 153 74. One day a brother went to visit his own sister who was sick in a monastery. She was a very pious lady for whom it was unacceptable to see a male person**,** not even her own brother, by reason of the fact that she had come into the company of women. She let him know, "My brother, go and pray for me, and by the grace of Christ, I shall see you in the kingdom of heaven."

N 154 75. A monk who encountered some nuns on the road got out of their way. Their superior said to him, "If you were a proper monk, you would not have noticed that we are women."

N 162 76. Some fathers once went down to Alexandria summoned by Archbishop Theophilos to offer prayer and tear down the [pagan] temples. As they were eating with him, veal was brought to table, and they ate some of it without noticing. Taking a slice, the archbishop gave it

to the elder beside him, saying, "See, this is a good slice; eat it, Abba." The [fathers], however, replied, "We have only eaten vegetables until now; if this is flesh, we are not eating it"—and not one of them went on eating it.

77. A brother at The Cells brought his own fresh little loaves and invited a tableful of ascetic elders. Each of them ate two little loaves and stopped. Fully aware of the fatigue of their ascetic discipline, the brother prostrated himself, saying, "For the sake of the Lord, eat until you are full today"—and they ate another ten dried loaves.[9] See how much beyond what they needed the true ascetics would eat for the sake of God! N 155

78. There was once an elder who was afflicted with a serious illness; his innards were bleeding profusely. One of the brethren happened to have some dried *lasura*.[10] He made some gruel, put them in it, and brought it to the elder. He entreated him to partake of it, saying, "Of your charity, eat it, for it might do you some good." The elder stared at him for some time and then said, "The truth is that I wanted God to leave me in this sickness for thirty more years," and, gravely sick though he was, the elder did not agree even take a sip of the gruel. The brother took it and departed to his cell. N 156

79. Another elder was living in the remote desert; a brother chanced to come by and found him ill. He took him, washed him, and cooking a little from the provisions he had brought, offered it to him to eat. In response the elder said, "Indeed, brother, I forgot that people used to have this comfort." He offered him a cup of wine too, and he wept when he saw that, saying, "I did not expect to drink wine until my death." N 157

80. An elder said, "Gluttony is the mother of *porneia*."

[9] *Paxamatia*, which is dried-out bread (hardtack), not *psōmia*, as above; this is puzzling.

[10] *Cordia myxa*, also known as Assyrian plum.

81. He also said, "He who masters his belly can master both *porneia* and [his] tongue."

N 158 82. An elder disciplined himself not to drink for forty days. Whenever there was a heat wave, he would rinse out his amphora, fill it with water, and hang it in front of himself. When he was asked by some brothers, "Why are you doing this?" he replied, "It is so that I am the more fatigued by thirst and receive a greater reward from God."

N 159 83. A brother was travelling. He had his own mother with him, and she was an old woman. When they came to the river, the old woman was unable to get across. Taking his own shawl, her son wound it around his own hands to prevent him from touching his mother's body. Carrying her in that way, he brought her over to the other side. "Why did you wrap your hands, my son?" the mother asked him, to which he replied, "Because the body of a woman is fire and from proximity with you would come the idea of another woman."

N 160 84. One of the fathers used to say, "I know a brother at The Cells who fasted throughout the week [before] Easter and then ran away when they gathered together in the evening in order not to eat at the church. He used to eat a few beets with salt but without oil."

N 357 85. Some brothers at Scete were called out to clean rope. One of them had become ill from the discipline; he was bringing up phlegm by coughing and was spitting. Although he did not want it to, some of his spittle landed on one of the brothers. The brother was tempted by his own *logismos* to tell the sick man to stop spitting on him. But immediately taking some of the spittle, he was on the point of ingesting it. Then he said to himself, "Neither swallow it nor speak."

Pambo 11 86. They used to say of Abba Pambo, Abba Bessarion, Isaiah, Abba Paësios, and Abba Athré that a priest of

the Mountain [of Nitria] asked them when they had met with each other, "How ought the brothers to be living?" "In great asceticism," the elders said, "and guarding their conscience with respect to their neighbor."

87. An elder said, "Self control is wealth of the soul; let us acquire it in a humble state of mind, taking flight from vainglory, the mother of evils."

88. An elder said, "Nobody acquires virtue without toil, or if he does, it does not stay with him. It is to those who mourn and hunger that the kingdom of heaven is promised" [see Matt 5:4-6].

89. Some people once brought vegetables and gourds to Scete and set them down by the church so that when the brothers came they could take a little to their own cells. One elder took a little of the vegetables and a few gourds and then, setting out, ate them raw along the way. A brother who met him said to him, "Where are your vegetables?" "I have eaten them," he said. "Look," said the brother to him, "I have kept mine." The elder said to him, "You are not hungry brother; that is why you have kept them."

90. A brother asked an elder, "What effect does indulging in indiscriminate eating and drinking have on a person?" "It generates every evil," the elder replied, "for we see that the utter desolation of Jerusalem came about because of Nebuzar-adan, the chief cook [see 2 Kgs 25:8]. Also, the Lord gives the commandment to his disciples: 'Watch out, lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life'" [Luke 21:34]. N 466

91. While the brothers were eating in the church at The Cells one Eastertide, they gave a cup of wine to a brother and coerced him to drink it. He said to them, "Excuse me, fathers, for you did this to me last year; I drank one cup and was afflicted for a long time." N 60

92. He also said, "It is also good to fast in order to feed the poor."

93. He also said, "Let us take our delight in the word of God[11] and rejoice in stories of the holy fathers, not taking delight in the belly but spiritually making merry."

N 468 94. An elder said, "Do not set the table before mealtime when you are alone; do not speak before being asked, and if you are asked, say what is appropriate, not something unpleasant."

95. An elder said, "Do not eat until you are famished, do not sleep until you are nodding off, and do not speak before being asked."

N 73 96. An elder was once travelling down to Scete, and a brother accompanied him on the journey. When they were about to part company, the elder said to him, "Let us eat together, brother," and they ate. It was before the time [for eating] on the first day of the week. Rising early on Saturday, the elder came to the brother and said to him, "Have you been hungry since we ate together, brother?" "No," [the brother] said to him. "I eat each day and am not hungry." "Ah, well," said the elder to him, "I have not eaten since then, my son, and I am hungry." The brother was conscience stricken on hearing this and enlightened.

N 29 97. One of the brothers used to say that a debate took place at the Lavra of Egypt and everybody spoke, great and small; there was only one who did not speak. As they were coming out, one brother asked him, "How was it that you did not speak?" Pressed by the brother, the other said to him, "Forgive me, but I said to my *logismos*, 'If the cushion beneath me says nothing, do not speak'—and thus I remained, not uttering anything."

[11] The Greek says, "in divine words."

98. An elder said, "Let not a monk who drinks more than three cups of wine pray for me." N 465

99. A brother used to say, "I know of an elder living on a mountain who accepted nothing from anybody. Having a little water supply, he used to cultivate vegetables, and he fed himself on them, living for fifty years, never venturing outside the wall that encircled his garden. He became very well known for the many cures that he used to perform each day on those who came to him. He fell asleep in peace there, leaving behind his five disciples in that place. N 419

100. A brother asked an elder, "What am I to do, Abba, for my belly is afflicting me? I am eating a great deal, and I cannot master it; little by little my body is running riot." In answer the elder said to him, "You will not walk correctly unless you impose fear and fasting on [your belly]," and he related a parable like this: A man had an ass, and while he was sitting on it, the ass would wander this way and that, so he took the staff and began beating the ass. The ass said to the man, "Do not beat me; I will walk correctly from now on." After he had gone a little further, the man dismounted and put the staff in the bag on the ass, but the ass did not know that it was up there. Thinking that he did not have a staff, it began to think nothing of him and to make its way into the crops. Its master came and, taking up the staff, beat the ass until it walked correctly. That is how it is with the belly too. N 431

101. The brother also asked the same elder, "How is it that my *logismoi* afflict me? I frequently rebuke them after they have captivated me, and they do not retreat but stand their ground." In reply the elder said to him, "Unless you say to them when you are famished, 'Go from me,' they will not go away but remain; for as long as they have repose, they will not go away." N 453

102. An elder said, "Fast with reason and moderation. See that the enemy does not involve himself in the business

of your fasting. I think it may be on this account that the Lord has said that you are to be faithful money changers [see Matt 25:27], meaning 'clearly recognize the imperial image,' for there are counterfeit coins too. The nature of gold is the same; the difference is in the image. Gold is fasting, self-control, almsgiving. But the children of the pagans place their usurper's image on these, and all the heretics glory in them. It is necessary to look at them and flee from them as false coins. Watch, therefore, lest you fall in with them untrained and are punished. Receive then with safety the cross of the Lord engraved on the virtues, that is, a true faith with holy actions."

N 28 103. One of the bishops paid a visit to the fathers at Scete once a year. [On one occasion] a brother met him and brought him into his cell, setting before him bread and salt with the words, "Forgive me, my lord, for I have nothing else to set before you." The bishop said to him, "When I come next year, I don't want even to find salt."

104. Once the Lenten fast was proclaimed at Scete; a brother came and announced it to a great elder, saying, "Abba, the fast has arrived." The elder said to him, "What fast, my son?" and the brother said, "The Lenten fast." Then the elder replied to him, "To be honest, my son, for fifty years I have not known when the fast you speak of either came in or went out, for all the year is a fast to me."

5

Various Narratives for Security in the Wars Arising against Us from *Porneia*

1. Abba Antony said, "I think that there is a natural impulse inherent in the body, but it does not operate if the soul is unwilling; it merely indicates a passionless impulse in the body. There is another impulse that arises from feeding and warming the body with food and drink, from which the heat of the body raises the body up for action. Thus the Apostle said, 'Do not get drunk with wine for that leads to profligacy' [Eph 5:18], and the Lord too, urging the disciples in the Gospel, said, 'See that your hearts are not weighed down with excessive eating and drinking' [Luke 21:34]. There is another impulse for those who are fighting the good fight that arises from the onslaught and envy of demons, so it should be known that there are three impulses of the body: one natural, one from indiscriminate feeding, and the third from demons." Antony 22

2. Abba Gerontius of Petra said, "Many are they who, tempted by the delights of the flesh, indulged in *porneia* in the mind without any physical contact. While preserving their physical virginity, they indulge in mental *porneia*. Beloved, it is good to carry out what is written, 'Let each one keep his own heart with all vigilance'" [Prov 4:23]. Gerontius

3. Abba John Colobos said, "He who stuffs himself and speaks with a child has already indulged in *porneia* with him in the mind." John Colobos 4

Cassian, *Coll* 2.13

4. Abba Cassian said, "Abba Moses used to tell us, 'It is good not to hide the *logismoi* but to declare them to spiritual and discerning elders, not to those who have only gone white with time, for many are they who, considering [a father's] age, confess their own *logismoi* and, instead of healing, fall into despair on account of the inexperience of the one hearing [the confession]. There was a brother, one of the most earnest in fact, who was severely troubled by the demon of *porneia*. He came to an elder and declared his own *logismoi* to him. The one hearing [him] was inexperienced; he became indignant and called the brother a wretch, unworthy of the monastic habit for entertaining such *logismoi*. The brother despaired of his case when he heard those things; he left his own cell and went back to the world, but, by the providence of God, Abba Apollo encountered him.

"'When [the elder] saw him troubled and looking so sad, he asked him, "What is the reason for such gloom as this?" At first he would not reply, he was so despondent; but later, after much urging on the part of the elder, he spoke out about his situation: "*Logismoi* of *porneia* are troubling me; I went and confessed to such and such an elder, and, according to what he said, there is no hope of salvation for me. I have given up on myself and am returning to the world." On hearing this, Father Apollo, like a wise physician, pleaded with him at length and admonished him, saying, "Do not be alarmed, my son, and do not give up on yourself, for I, too, at this age and with white hair am terribly troubled by these *logismoi.* Do not be disheartened by such a fever, which is not so much cured by human effort as by the mercy of God. Just do me the favor of returning to your cell today."

"'The brother did so. On leaving him, Abba Apollo went to the cell of the elder who had given up on the brother. Standing outside, he besought God with tears, saying, "Lord, you who bring temptation upon those who can benefit from it, transfer the brother's battle

to this elder so that he may be tempted in his old age in order to learn that which in a long time he was not taught, so he can sympathize with those who are under attack." On completing his prayer, he saw a burnt-faced one standing near the cell, firing darts at the elder. Immediately wounded by these, [the elder] began staggering hither and thither like a drunken man. He could not carry on; he came out of the cell and left for the world by the same route as the young man. Abba Apollo knew what had happened; he went to meet him, and when he approached, he said, "Where are you going, and what is the reason for the trouble that has you in prey?" He was embarrassed that his situation was known to the holy one and too ashamed to speak.

"'Abba Apollo said to him, "Go back to your cell and be aware of your weakness in the future. Keep yourself either unknown to or despised by the devil. For that reason you were not even considered worthy to engage in the struggle against him as the serious ones [struggle]. Why do I say struggle? You were not able to sustain his onslaught for so much as one day! This came upon you because when you received a young man under attack by our common enemy, instead of preparing him for the contest, you reduced him to despair, unmindful of that wise injunction, 'Deliver those who are being taken to death; do not refrain from buying off those who are being killed' [see Prov 14:11], and of the parable of God our Savior that says, 'A bruised reed shall he not break and smoking flax shall he not quench' [Matt 12:20; see Isa 42:3]. Nobody can withstand the onslaughts of the enemy, neither quench nor contain the fiery seething of nature, unless the grace of God protects [our] human weakness. So then, since that saving dispensation has been accomplished for us, let us beseech God in common prayer to turn away the scourge that has been let loose upon you, for it is he who makes one suffer and sets one up again; he struck and his hands healed; he

humbles and exalts; he puts to death and gives life; he leads down to Hades and leads back up." So saying and praying, he then and there released him from the battle that had been brought upon him. He exhorted him to ask that there be given to him by God an instructed tongue that he might know the right time when he should open his mouth and utter a saying.'"

Cyrus

5. When he was questioned regarding the *logismos* of *porneia*, Abba Cyrus of Alexandria answered thus: "If you do not have *logismoi*, you do not have hope. If you do not have *logismoi*, you have the act. This means that he who does not battle sin in his mind nor contradict it physically indulges in it. For he who does the deeds is not troubled by *logismoi.*" The elder asked the brother, "Surely you are not in the habit of talking to women?" and the brother said, "No. Old and new pictures are my *logismoi*; it is memories and women's statues that trouble me." The elder said to him, "Have no fear of the dead but flee from the living—meaning consenting to and committing the sin—and persevere more in prayer."

Matoēs 8

6. Abba Matoēs would say, "A brother came to me and said that backbiting was worse than *porneia*. 'That is a hard saying,' I said, so the brother said to him,[1] 'And what do you think is the case?' The elder said, 'Backbiting is bad but cured more quickly, for the backbiter often repents, saying, "I did wrong, speaking like that," but *porneia* is physical death.'"

Poemen 14

7. Abba Poemen said, "Just as the guardsman of the emperor stands by his side, always at the ready, so must the soul be at the ready against the demon of *porneia.*"

Poemen 154

8. He also said, "A person ought not to concede anything whatsoever to these two *logismoi*: *porneia* and backbiting against [his] neighbor. He ought not to speak

[1] The text remains in the first person in *APalph*.

anything of them or to think of them in his heart. By turning away from them he will have repose and reap great benefit."

9. A brother once came to Abba Poemen and said to him, "What am I to do, Father, for I am afflicted by *porneia*? Look, I went to Abba Ibistion and he said to me, 'You ought not to let it go on [troubling] you.'" Abba Poemen said to him, "The deeds of Abba Ibistion are up in heaven with the angels, and he does not realize that you and I are subject to *porneia*. But in my opinion, if a person masters his belly and his tongue, he can have confidence in himself." Poemen 62

10. A brother asked Abba Poemen about *porneia*. The elder said to him, "Plentiful is the help of God surrounding a person; but we are not permitted to see it with our eyes."

11. Another brother asked Abba Poemen, "What am I to do, for I am embattled by *porneia* and possessed by anger?" The elder said to him, "For that reason David said**, '**I smote the lion and throttled the bear' [see 1 Sam 17:35], meaning, 'I cut off anger and wore down *porneia* by toil.'" Poemen 115

12. He also said, "It is impossible for you to live a godly life if you are in love with pleasure and money." Isidore the Priest 3

13. They said of Amma Sarah that for thirteen years she continued to be fiercely embattled by the demon of *porneia* and never prayed to be relieved of the battle but would only say, "Oh my God, give me strength!" Sarah 1

14. They also said of her that the same spirit of *porneia* attacked her more vehemently, suggesting the vanities of the world to her. But she, without diminishing her fear of God or her asceticism, went up to her room one day to pray. The spirit of *porneia* appeared to her in bodily form and said to her, "Sarah, you have conquered me," Sarah 2

but she said to him, "It is not I who have conquered you but Christ, my Lord-and-master."

N 163 15. A brother was harassed by *porneia*, and the warfare in his heart was like a fire burning day and night. The brother put up a strong resistance not to give in to the *logismos*, and after a considerable time, the warfare went away, not having the strength [to accomplish] anything, thanks to the patient endurance of the brother. And immediately repose came into his heart.

N 164 16. Yet another brother was embattled by *porneia*. Getting up in the night, he came to an elder and told him of his *logismos*. The elder gave him courage, and he went back to his cell reassured. But here the warfare began setting on him again, and again he came to the elder; and this he did many times. The elder did not distress him but would speak beneficial words to him, saying, "Do not give an inch, but rather come [here] every time the demon troubles you; and denounce him, for he retreats when he is denounced like that. This is because nothing disgusts the demon of *porneia* as much as having his deeds exposed, while nothing pleases him as much as having the *logismoi* kept secret." Eleven times the brother came to that elder, accusing himself of the *logismos*. Finally the brother said to the elder, "Of your charity, Abba, utter a saying for me." "Cheer up, my son," the elder said to him. "If God were to allow my *logismos* to come to you, you could not bear it but would descend much lower." By virtue of [the elder's] great humility, the brother's warfare ceased when he said that.

N 165 17. Another brother was embattled by *porneia*. He struggled against it, intensifying his self-discipline for fourteen years, keeping watch on the *logismos* in order not to give in to the desire. Later on he came to church and made a public declaration of the matter. A directive was given, and for a week everybody toiled away, praying to God on his behalf—and the warfare was put to rest.

18. Concerning the *logismos* of *porneia*, an elder who was a hermit said, "Do you want to be saved lying down? Go work; go labor; go 'Seek and ye shall find; keep watch; knock and it shall be opened unto you' [Luke 11:9]. In the world there are all-in wrestlers who receive a crown for having sustained and endured many [blows] while remaining in good shape. Often one being beaten by two was in good shape [despite] the blows and overcame those beating him. Did you see what excellent shape they maintained through providing for the flesh? Do you too so stand and be in good shape, and then God will fight the enemy on your behalf." N 166

19. Concerning the same *logismos*, another elder said, "Do you be like one passing by an eating house in a marketplace and smelling the soup or some roasting meat. He who wished to do so went in and ate; he who did not want to simply smelled as he passed by and then went away. So it is with you; shake off from yourself the stench [of *porneia*] and then get up and pray, saying, 'Son of God, help me.' Do this in the case of other *logismoi* too, for we are not here to eradicate the *logismoi* but to resist them." N 167

20–21. Concerning the same *logismos*, another elder said, "We experience these things through negligence, for if we were confident that God dwells within us, we would introduce no alien matter to our person. For the Lord Christ, dwelling within us and present with us, observes our life. So we, carrying and seeing him, ought not to be negligent but to purify ourselves as he is pure [see 1 John 3:3]. Let us stand on the rock, and let the evil one be dashed upon it. Have no fear: he will not harm you. Sing energetically, 'They who have trusted in the Lord are as Mount Sion; he shall never be shaken for ever who dwells in Jerusalem'" [Ps 124:1]. N 78–79

22. A brother questioned an elder, "If a monk falls into sin, he is distressed because he has gone from progressing N 168

to regressing. He labors away until he recovers, whereas a person coming from the world makes progress as one starting at the beginning." In answer the elder said, "A monk who yields to temptation is like a house that has fallen down. If he keeps a steady watch over his thoughts and wishes to rebuild the house that fell down, he will find many materials (such as foundations, stones, and in-fill), and he can make better progress than the person who has neither excavated nor laid a foundation and has nothing that he needs but lives in hope that his work will one day be finished. This is how it is for the one engaged in the monastic endeavor if he yields to temptation then returns [to the fight]. He has many advantages: meditation, psalm singing, and manual labor—these are the foundations. The monk regains his former status while the debutant is learning these things."

N 169 23. A brother who was troubled by *porneia* visited a great elder and besought him, saying, "Of your charity, pray for me, for I am troubled by *porneia*." The elder interceded with God on his behalf. He came to the elder a second time and told the same tale; likewise, the elder did not relax his calling upon God for him, saying, "Lord, show me the assiduity of this brother and where the impulse [to *porneia*] is coming from, for I called upon you and he has not yet found repose." God revealed the brother's situation to him; he saw him sitting with the spirit of *porneia* close by him, chatting with it. There was an angel standing beside him, sent to help him; the angel was angry with the brother for not casting himself upon God but rather enjoying the *logismoi* and devoting his own entire mind to the impulse. Then the elder knew that the brother was the reason why, and he told him when he came, "You are the cause, you who assent to your *logismoi*," and he taught him how to withstand the *logismoi*. Brought to his senses by the teaching and prayers of the elder, the brother found repose.

24. A disciple of a great elder was once assaulted by *porneia*. Perceiving that he was laboring, the elder said to him, "Do you want me to beseech God to assuage the warfare from you?" "No," he said, "for even though I am laboring to resist it, yet I realize that some benefit is accruing to me from my labor. Rather, beseech God for this in your prayers: to give me patient endurance to bear it." His *abba* said to him, "This day I realize that you are making progress; indeed, that you are outstripping me." N 170

25. They used to say of one elder that he brought his son, a child not yet weaned, when he came down to Scete; [the child] did not know what a woman was. When he became a man, the demons began showing him the forms of women by night. This he reported to his father, who was amazed. Then, one day while he was going up to Egypt with his father, on seeing a woman, he said to his father, "It is those who come to me at night at Scete." "Those are the monks of the villages, my son" [his father] said to him. "They have one form, while desert dwellers have another." The elder was amazed that the demons displayed visions of women to him even at Scete; they returned to their cell. N 171

26. There was a brother fighting the good fight at Scete, and the enemy put him in mind of a certain most beautiful woman, cruelly afflicting him. Then, by the providence of God, another brother came down from Egypt to Scete, and as they were speaking together, he said that the wife of so-and-so had died: the very woman on whose account the brother was embattled. On hearing this, he took his *levitôn*, and going up to Egypt by night, he opened her tomb. He mopped up her bodily fluids with the *levitôn* and returned to his cell with it. He would set that stench before him and do battle with the *logismos*, saying, "Look, the desire you are pursuing: you have it before you, take your fill!" In this way he tormented himself with the stench until the warfare ceased from him. N 172

N 173 27. A man came to Scete to become a monk, bringing with him his son who was scarcely weaned. The demons began attacking him when he became a young man. "I am going [back] to the world," he said to his father, "for I cannot endure the warfare." His father persisted in pleading with him, and again the youth said to him, "Abba, I can [take] no more. Let me go!" "Listen to me just once more, my son," his father said to him. "Get yourself forty measures of bread and palm fronds for forty days, then go away into the remoter desert and remain there for forty days—and the will of God be done!" Heeding his father, he got up and went into the desert; he stayed there for twenty days, laboring away, braiding dry palm fronds, and eating dry bread. Then he saw the alien force coming toward him and standing before him in the form of a burnt-faced woman, so foul smelling that he could not bear her stench, but he chased her off. Then the demon said to him, "I appear to be sweet in the hearts of men, but, thanks to your obedience and your labor, God has not permitted me to deceive you but has revealed my stench to you." He got up, gave thanks to God, and returned to his father, saying to him, "I no longer want to go away, Abba, for I have seen the alien force and its stench." His father, who had been assured about this, said to the young man, "If you had stayed there forty days and fully discharged the commandment, you would have seen a greater vision."

N 176 28. There was an elder living far away in the desert; he had a female relative who, for many years, longed to see him. She inquired where he was living and then took the road into the desert. Encountering camel drivers as company, she went into the desert with them; but it was the devil who was leading her on. When she came to the elder's gate, she began making herself known by certain indications, saying, "I am your relative," and she stayed by him. Now there was a hermit living farther down; as he was filling his bottle with water at his mealtime,

it was overturned. By the providence of God he said to himself, "I will go into the desert and tell the elder," and then he got up and went. When it became late, he lay down to sleep in a temple of idols by the wayside, and during the night he heard the demons saying, "Tonight we have cast such and such a hermit into *porneia*." He was sad when he heard this; when he came to the elder's place, he found him downcast. "What am I to do, Abba?" he asked, "for as I was filling my bottle with water at mealtime, it was overturned." The elder said to him, "You came asking me because your vessel was overturned? And what am I to do, for I have fallen into *porneia* this very night." "And I too found out about it," the other said. "How do you know about it?" he said to him, and [the other] said to him, "As I was sleeping in the temple, I heard the demons talking about you." "Look," the elder said, "I too am going out into the world," but the other begged him saying, "No, Father. Stay in your place but send the woman away, for this is an encounter with the enemy." On hearing him [the elder] intensified his way of life with tears until he regained his former status.

29. An elder said, "Lack of anxiety [see Matt 6:25-34], keeping silent, and silent meditation bring forth purity." N 127

30. A brother asked an elder, "If somebody happens to fall victim to temptation under some alien force, what about those who are offended?" and he told a story thus: "There was a renowned deacon in a *cœnobion* of Egypt. A magistrate who was being sought after by a governor came to the *cœnobion* with his entire household. By the alien force of the devil, the deacon fell [into sin] with a woman; it was a disgrace to them all. Going to an elder much beloved by him, [the deacon] reported the affair. Now the elder had a hidden place within his cell; the deacon begged him, saying, 'Bury me alive in there and tell nobody.' Into that place of darkness he N 177

went, and there he truly repented. Some time later, the water of the river did not rise. Whilst everybody was engaged in intercessory processions, it was revealed to one of the saints that unless the deacon hidden away with such and such an elder come out and offer prayer, the water would not rise. Amazed on hearing this, they went and brought him out of the place where he was. He prayed—and the water rose. Those who had once been offended were now much more inclined to be edified by his repentance, and they glorified God."

N 179 31. Two brothers went to market to sell their wares, and while they were apart from each other, one of them fell into *porneia*. When the other brother came to him, he said, "Let us go to our cell, brother," but the other answered him, saying, "I am not coming." His brother begged him, saying, "Why not, brother?" "Because when you went away from me I fell into *porneia*," he said. Wanting to win him back, the other brother began saying, "I also; when I went away from you, it happened to me like that too. But let us go and repent diligently, and God will pardon us." When they returned, they reported what had befallen them to the elders, and [the elders] prescribed repentance for them. The one [brother] did penance for the other as though he had sinned himself. When God perceived the effort he was making out of his love, within a few days he revealed to one of the elders that the brother who had sinned was pardoned on account of the great love of the one who had not sinned. Now behold: that is laying down one's soul for his brother [see John 15:13].

N 180 32. A brother once came to an elder saying, "My brother is wearing me out with his coming and going, and I am troubled." The elder encouraged him and said to him, "Put up with him, brother, and when God sees the effort of your patient endurance, he will care for him. One cannot easily care for another by being severe with him,

nor does one demon drive out another demon. Rather, care for him in kindness, for our God cares for folk by consoling them," and he told him this story: "There were two brothers in the Thebaid, and one of them, impelled toward *porneia*, said to the other, 'I am going to the world,' whereupon the other began to weep and said, 'My brother, I am not going to let you go and destroy your labor and your virginity,' but the other was not convinced. He said, 'I am not staying without going there. Either come with me and I will return with you, or let me go and I will stay in the world.' The [second] brother went and reported this to a great elder, but the elder said, 'Go with him, and on account of your labor, God will not allow him to fall.' They arose and went to where there was habitation. God beheld the labor of his love when they arrived at the village, and he removed the warfare from the [other] brother. That one said to his brother, 'Let us go back into the desert, brother. For look: suppose I sinned; what profit would I have gained by it?' And they returned to their cell unharmed."

33. A brother tempted by a demon went to an elder and said, "Those two brothers are together and they are living badly." Perceiving that the brother was being made a fool of by a demon, the elder sent for them. He put out a mat for the two brothers when evening fell and covered them with a single spread, saying, "These are holy and great children of God." To his disciple he said, "Shut this brother up in a cell all on his own, for it is he who has the passion in himself." N 181

34. Somebody asked an elder, "What am I to do about *porneia*, Father?" He said, "It is up to you to be on your guard to the best of your ability concerning this *logismos*, for it causes a person who is overcome by it to despair of his salvation. Just as a ship encountering waves, tempest, and storm is in danger if it loses its N 393

rudder but still sails on, and if the mast or some part of the rigging breaks away, there is still hope as long as the hull is intact, so the monk, negligent though he might be, can hope to survive other temptations by repentance. But if he is once shipwrecked by the passion of *porneia*, he falls into despair and his vessel goes to the bottom."

N 182 35. A brother said to an elder, "What am I to do, Father? The impure *logismos* is killing me!" The elder told him, "When a mother wishes to wean her child, she puts wormwood[2] on her breast, and when the child comes to suckle as usual, it turns away because of the bitterness. If you are willing, do you apply wormwood too." "And what is that wormwood which I ought to apply?" the brother said to him, and the elder said, "It is the recollection of death and of the punishments of the age to come."

N 183 36. Another brother asked an elder about this *logismos*, and the elder said to him, "I was never embattled with that matter." The brother was offended; he went to another elder and said, "Look, this is what such and such an elder told me, and I was offended because what he said was unnatural." This elder said to him, "That is not all there is to what the man of God said to you. Go and prostrate yourself, [asking] him to tell you the significance of what he said." So the brother got up and came to the [first] elder, prostrated himself, and said to him, "Forgive me; it was mindless of me to take off like that. So I beg you to explain to me how you were never embattled by *porneia*." The elder said to him, "Never since I became a monk have I taken my fill of bread, of water, or of sleep. Concern about those things so disturbed me that it prevented me from experiencing the warfare of which you spoke." Then the brother went out edified.

[2] *Skilla* (*ungea maritima*), a bitter onion. See "For I had then laid wormwood to my dug," William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* 1.3.26.

37. A brother asked one of the fathers, "What am I to do, for my *logismos* is always tending toward *porneia*. It does not give me a moment's repose, and my soul is distressed." He said to him, "When the demons sow *logismoi*, have no truck with them, for it is their function always to put them forward. They never miss a chance, but they do not constrain; the choice is yours, whether to accept or not. You know what the Midianites did? They decked out their daughters and put them on display. They constrained nobody, but those who wished to do so fell into sin with [the daughters], while others treated them with disdain and slaughtered them [Num 25:1-3]. It is like that with the *logismoi*." In reply the brother said, "So what am I to do, for I am weak and passion conquers me?" "Keep a watch on them," he said, "and do not answer when they begin to speak. Get up and pray; prostrate yourself, saying, 'Have mercy on me, Son of God.'" Again the brother said, "Look, Abba, I meditate but there is no sorrow for sin in my heart—for I do not know what the phrase means." "Just keep on meditating," he said to him. "I have heard that Abba Poemen and many of the fathers uttered this saying: 'The snake charmer does not know the meaning of the words he speaks, but the serpent hears, knows the meaning of the phrase, and obeys.' That is how it is with us; even if we do not know the meaning of what we are saying, the demons hear and retreat in fear." N 184

38. The elders used to say that the *logismos* of *porneia* is a book.[3] If, when it is planted among us, we reject it and cast it away from us, it is excised with ease. But if, once it is implanted, we delight in it like those who have been won over, it is transformed, becoming like iron, and is only excised with difficulty. Discernment is necessary for this *logismos*, for there is no hope of salvation for those who are won over by it, whilst a crown awaits those who are not won over by it. N 185

[3] *Biblion.* Some versions read *schoilion,* reed or rush.

N 186 39. Two brothers who were embattled by *porneia* went away and took women. Later they said to each other, "What have we achieved, abandoning the angelic order and coming into this uncleanness? After this we are heading for fire and eternal punishment; let us go out into the desert again." Out they went and besought the fathers to give them a penance after confessing what they had done. The elders confined them for a year, giving each one the same amount of bread and water. Now they looked very much alike; but when the time of their repentance was fulfilled, they came out and the fathers saw that one of them was downcast and pale while the other looked flourishing and joyful. This was cause for wonder since they had each received the same nourishment. They asked the one who was downcast this question: "What occupied your *logismoi* while you were in your cell?" "I was thinking of the wrong I had done and the punishment to which I was about to go. 'My bones cleaved to my flesh' [Ps 101:6] for very fear," he replied. Then they asked the other one, "And you, what were you thinking of in your cell?" "I was giving thanks to God," he replied, "for having delivered me from the uncleanness of the world and from the impending punishment—also for having brought me to this angelic way of life. 'The remembrance of God filled me with joy'" [cf. Ps 76:4]. The elders said that the repentance of the two was equal in the sight of God.

N 187 40. There was an elder at Scete who fell seriously ill and was waited upon by brothers. Seeing that they were struggling, the elder said, "I am going to Egypt in order not to impose on the brothers." Abba Poemen said to him, "Do not go away, or you will fall into *porneia*." Distressed, the elder said, "My body has died, and you say this?"—and so he went to Egypt. When people heard, they brought him many things, and there was a female preserving her virginity in faith who came to tend the elder. In due course he recovered; then he fell with her.

She conceived in her womb and bore a son. People said to her, "Who did you get this from?" and she said, "From the elder." They did not believe her, but the elder said, "I did it; but keep the son that is born"—and they kept it. After it was weaned, one day when there was a feast taking place at Scete, the elder went down carrying the child on his shoulder. He entered the church and said to the brothers, "Look at this child: it is the son of disobedience. So, brothers, secure yourselves, for it was in my old age that I did this; and do you pray for me." They all wept at the sight [of him], while he went off to his cell and began his former endeavor all over again.

41. A brother was enflamed by the demon of *porneia*. N 188
Four demons transformed into the appearance of beautiful women were around for twenty days, wrestling with him to draw him into shameful intercourse. He bravely struggled on and was not overcome; when God perceived his valiant fight, he granted him grace never to burn in the flesh again [see 1 Cor 7:9].

42. There was an anchorite in the lower parts of Egypt N 189
who was of great fame because he lived all alone in a cell in a desert place. Then here, by the alien force of Satan, there was a disreputable woman who, when she heard about him, said to the young men, "What will you give me if I overthrow your anchorite?" They agreed to give her something valuable. She went out in the evening and came to his cell as though she had lost her way. He came out when she knocked and was troubled when he saw her, saying, "How do you come to be here?" "I came here having lost my way," she cried with tears. Moved with compassion, he brought her into his little courtyard, went into his cell, and shut the door. And here the wretched woman began calling out, saying, "Abba, the wild beasts are devouring me!" Again he was troubled, but, fearing the judgment of God, he said, "From where did this wrath come upon

me?" He opened the door and brought her in. Now the devil began to fire arrows at him on her account. Recognizing the warfare of the enemy, he said to himself, "The wiles of the enemy are darkness, but the Son of God is light," so he stood up and lit the lamp. Burning with desire, he said, "Those who do such things are on their way to chastisement; put yourself to the test here, to see whether you can endure the eternal fire." He thrust his finger into the lamp and burned it without feeling anything, because his flesh was burning yet more intensely. He repeated this action until morning, burning all his fingers. When that wretched woman saw what he was doing, she was petrified with fear. At dawn the young men came to the anchorite and said, "Did a woman come here last night?" "Yes," he said, "she is sleeping inside." Finding her dead when they went in, they said to him, "Abba, she has died." He uncovered his hands and showed them to them, saying, "Look what the daughter of the devil did to me; she has lost me my fingers." He told them what had happened, then he said, "It is written, 'Render not evil for evil'" [1 Pet 3:9]; he offered a prayer and raised her up. She went her way and lived the rest of her life in sobriety.

N 190 43. A brother was embattled by *porneia.* He happened to pass through a village of Egypt where he saw the daughter of a priest of the pagans. He promptly fell in love with her. "Give me your daughter in marriage," he said to her father, who answered him, "I cannot give her to you without consulting my god." He went to the demon and said to him, "Here there is a monk who has come wanting my daughter; shall I give her to him?" Said the demon, "Ask him if he will deny his God, his baptism, and his monastic vow," so the priest came to him, saying, "Will you deny your God, your baptism, and your monastic vow?" The other agreed to this, and straightaway he saw something that looked like a dove coming out of his mouth and flying up on high. Going

to his demon at the temple, the priest said, "Look, he has agreed to these three [conditions]," whereupon the devil answered him, saying, "Do not give him your daughter in marriage, for his God has not really withdrawn from him but is still helping him." The priest came to the brother and said, "I cannot give her to you, for your God is still helping you and has not forsaken you." When the brother heard this, he said to himself, "Has God shown such goodness to me that while I, wretch that I am, have denied him, [my] baptism, and [my] monastic vow, he in his goodness is even now helping me?" Coming to his senses and once again on his guard, he went out to a great elder in the desert and told him about the matter. In response the elder said to him, "Stay with me in my cave and fast for three weeks in succession, and I will intercede with God on your behalf." The elder put himself to great pains for the brother's sake, praying to God in these words: "I pray you, Lord, grant me this soul and accept his repentance," and God heard his prayer. When the first week was over, the elder came to the brother and asked him this question: "Have you seen anything?" In answer to him, he replied, "Yes, I saw the dove up there in the height of heaven, located above my head." "Pay attention to what you are doing and pray constantly to God," was the elder's response. He came to the brother again at the end of the second week, asking him, "Have you seen anything?" "I saw the dove coming [down] onto my head," he replied. "Watch and pray," the elder commanded. On completion of the third week, the elder came again and asked him if he had seen anything else, to which he replied, "I have seen the dove come to rest above my head. I put out my hand to take it, but it flew into my mouth." At that point the elder offered thanks to God and said to the brother, "You see, God has accepted your repentance. Now, keep your mind on what you are doing." "From now on and until I die, I am going to stay with you, Abba," the brother replied.

N 191 44. One of the fathers at Thebes said, "I was the child of a priest of idols. When I was little I used to sit in the temple and watch my father coming in and offering sacrifices to the idols. Then, on one occasion, I came in behind him without his knowledge and saw Satan sitting there with his army standing by, and here one officer of his came and fell down before him. In response the devil said to him, "Where have you come from?" "I was in such and such a village," he said; "I provoked wars and great disorder; I caused bloodshed and am come to report to you." "How long did it take you to do this?" [the devil] said to him. "Thirty days," he said. [The devil] ordered him to be flogged, saying, "You [only] did that in so much time?" Then here another [officer] fell down before him and he said to him, "Where have you come from?" "I was at sea," he replied; "I caused storms to arise, I sank ships and killed many men; I am come to report to you." [The devil] said to him, "How long did it take you to do this?" and in answer the demon said it took him twenty days. "And why did you only do that much in so many days?" the devil asked, ordering him to be flogged. And now here a third one came and fell down before him. "And where are you coming from?" [the devil] said to him, and in answer he replied, "There was a wedding in such and such a city; I caused a fight to break out with much shedding of blood, even the bride's and the groom's; I am come to report to you." "In how many days did you do this?" [the devil] said. "In ten," he said, and [the devil] ordered him to be flogged for taking too long. A fourth one came and fell down before him. "And where have you come from?" [the devil] said to him, and he said, "I was in the desert; and look, for forty years I have been assaulting a certain monk, and this very night I caused him to fall into *porneia*." When [the devil] heard this, he stood up and embraced him; taking off the crown he was wearing, he placed it on the other's head and seated him beside himself on his

throne, saying, "You have accomplished a great deed." The elder said, "When I saw this, I said, 'Great indeed is the order of monks!' and since God was delighted in my salvation, I went out and became a monk."

45. They said of one of the fathers that coming from the world, he was embattled concerning his own wife, and he explained this to the fathers. Seeing that he was a willing worker who did even more than they told him to, they imposed disciplines on him with the result that his body was exhausted and he could no longer get up. By Divine Providence one of the fathers from elsewhere came to visit Scete. Coming to this man's cell, he saw that it was open, and he passed on, amazed that nobody came out to meet him. Then he retraced his footsteps and knocked, saying to himself, "Perhaps the brother is ill." After knocking, in he went and found the brother unwell. "What is matter with you, father?" he asked, to which the other explained, saying, "I have come from the world, and now the enemy is at war with me concerning my wife. I explained this to the fathers, and they imposed a variety of tasks on me. I became exhausted performing them—and the war intensifies." Saddened on hearing this, the elder said to him, "Being in a position of authority, the fathers acted correctly in laying discipline on you; but if you will listen to my humility, cast it from you. Take a little food at mealtime; perform your little *synaxis* and 'cast your burden of care upon the Lord' [Ps 54:23]. You cannot get the better of this situation by your own labors. Our body is like a garment: if you take care of it, it holds up; but if you neglect it, it wastes away." When he heard this, [the monk] did as the elder suggested, and within a few days the warfare ceased for him. N 174

46. There was an anchorite of great age living on a mountain in the region of Antinoe who was progressing in holiness. We heard it from reputable monks that many N 175

used to benefit from his words and his deeds. The enemy became jealous of a man of such quality (as indeed he does of all virtuous persons) and suggested this *logismos* to him in the guise of piety: "You ought not to be served or waited upon by others, but you should rather serve others yourself. At least do yourself this service: sell your own baskets in the city, buy what you need, and return forthwith to your place of retreat." The devil gave this advice out of jealousy for his *hēsychia*, the appropriate attention he paid to the Lord, and the benefit he conferred on many. The enemy endeavored in every way to hunt down and to entrap him.

As though he had been convinced by a good *logismos*, this hitherto greatly admired elder, famous and renowned in the eyes of his visitors (even though he had no experience of the great craftiness of the trapper), came down from his monastery. When, after a long time, he encountered a woman, derailed by his lack of caution, he came to a remote place with the enemy following him and fell [into sin] beside the river. Convinced that the enemy was rejoicing in his fall, he was inclined to despair of his own case, for he had grieved the Spirit of God, the angels, and the holy fathers, many of whom had vanquished the enemy, even in cities. He was greatly distressed by his failure to be like any of those. Forgetting that God supplies strength to those who sincerely hope in him and being insensible to the healing of his default, he wanted to throw himself into the current of the river—to the utter delight of the enemy. His body fell ill from the great distress of his soul, and if the God of mercy had not later come to his aid so that he did not die [he would have perished] to the great delight of the enemy.

When at last he came to his senses, he resolved to demonstrate greater effort by enduring hardship and to intercede with God with weeping and sorrow. He withdrew to his own monastery again. Sealing the door, he wept as one must weep for the dead, in supplication to

God and keeping watch with true repentance. His body wasted away, yet he received no assurance about his repentance. To the brothers who often came visiting for their own benefit and knocking at his door, he said he could not open, "For I have given my word that for one year I will genuinely repent," and he said, "Pray for me." He was at a loss what to say, not wishing to give offense to those who were listening, for he was held in honor by them as a very great monk. He spent the entire year continually fasting and sincerely repenting.

When Easter Day approached, in the night of the holy resurrection, as the holy Sunday began to dawn, he took a new lamp, made it ready, and placed it in a new pot, which he covered. At nightfall he stood to pray, saying, "O compassionate and merciful God, you who want even barbarians 'to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' [1 Tim 2:4], to you I fly, Lord, the father of the faithful. Have mercy on me who have so often fallen aside to the joy of the enemy. See, I am dead in obedience to his will. You, master, who are merciful to the godless and the merciless and teach us to have pity on our neighbors, take pity on my humility, for with you nothing is impossible, and my soul has been scattered like dust in hell. Have mercy on me, for you are kindly disposed to your own creation, and you are even going to raise up bodies that are no more at the day of resurrection. Hear me, Lord, for my spirit and my miserable soul are fainting away, while the body that I have defiled languishes, and I can no longer live. Now that I have been seized by fear of you, I am not confident that my offense has been pardoned on account of my penitence, as I have double despair. Infuse life into me [who am] of broken body and order this lamp to be lit with fire so that, with your consent, confident in your mercy, for as much of the remaining time as you grant me to live, I may keep your commandments and not desist from fearing you but serve you, now as before."

Saying this with many tears in the night of the resurrection, he got up to see whether the lamp had been lit. When he opened it and saw that it had not been lit, he fell on his face again and begged the Lord, saying, "Lord, I realize that it was a trial [to test whether] I could be crowned, but I did not watch where I was going, choosing rather to be subject to affliction because of the wicked tasting of the pleasures of the flesh. Spare me, Lord! Behold, yet again, in the presence of your angels and of all the righteous, I confess my shamelessness to your great goodness. And I would have confessed it before people too, if it had not been a cause of offense [to them]. Wherefore take pity on my soul, that it might be a training to others. Yes, Lord: infuse life into me!"

After he had prayed like this three times, his request was granted; he got up and found the lamp burning brightly. Rejoicing in the hope that came from God and strengthened with heartfelt joy, he marveled at the grace of God that had been given in assurance. Then he said, "I thank you, Lord, that even though I was unworthy of life and of the world, you have shown me your mercy by this great and very strange sign, for you, O lover of folk, you spare your souls!" And while he persisted with the acknowledgement and thanksgiving to the Lord, the holy day dawned, and rejoicing in the Lord, he forgot about bodily nourishment. He conserved the fire of the lamp all the days of his life, adding oil and trimming it from above so that it would never go out. Thus the divine Spirit dwelt within him again, and he became illustrious among them all, humble in his acknowledgement and thanksgiving to the Lord. When the time came for him to surrender his soul, he had a revelation some days before his death, and so he went to rest in the Lord.

N 50 47. A brother went to draw water from the river; there he found a woman who was washing clothes, and it transpired that he fell [into sin] with her. After the sin, he took the water and went off to his cell. But the de-

mons assailed him and began to afflict him through his *logismoi*, saying, "Now where are you going? There is no salvation for you any more, so why do you deprive yourself of the world?" Realizing that they wanted him to be altogether lost, the brother said to his *logismoi*, "From where did you come upon me, and why are you afflicting me to make me despair of myself? I did not sin!" But going back to his cell, he dwelt in *hēsychia*, as the day before and previously. But the Lord revealed to an elder who was his neighbor that brother so-and-so, after falling [into sin], had triumphed. The elder came to him and said to him, "How are you, brother?" He said, "I am well, Abba." Said the elder to him, "God revealed to me that after falling [into sin], you triumphed." Then the brother told him all that had happened to him. The elder said to him, "Indeed, your discernment shattered the power of the enemy, brother."

48. There was an anchorite, a virgin who scarcely knew what a woman was. So the demon of *porneia* began to trouble him. He was burning up completely, but owing to his lack of experience, he did not realize it was lust to do the deed; thus the servant of God only knew sexual desire without knowing for what he lusted. So the devil showed him somebody lying with a woman in a shameful act. But when God saw the deceit of the demon and its intensity, he protected the fellow and put an end to the warfare. N 455

49. Some worldlings visited an anchorite, and he received them joyfully when he saw them, saying, "The Lord sent you to bury me, for my call has arrived. Yet for your benefit and theirs who hear it, I am going to tell you my life story. Brothers, I am a virgin in the body; yet in my soul I have been suffering ruthless coercion by the enemy toward *porneia* until this very day. But look, even as I am speaking to you I see the angels waiting to take my soul and over there Satan standing, thrusting *logismoi* of N 63

porneia at me." So saying, he stretched himself out and died. As the worldlings were preparing him for burial, they found that he was indeed a virgin.

Olympius 2

50. There was an elder staying at The Cells, and his *logismos* said to him, "Go and get yourself a woman." He got up, puddled some clay, and formed a woman for himself. Then said the elder, "Look, your woman! You need to work harder to feed her," and work he did, laboring mightily. Some days later he got up again, puddled some [more] clay, and formed himself a daughter. Then he said to his *logismos*, "Look, your woman has given birth; now you need to work even harder so you can feed and clothe your children." So doing, he wore out his own flesh with labor, and he said to his *logismos*, "I do not have the strength to endure the labor any longer," and [his *logismos*] said to him, "If you do not have the strength to labor, then do not go looking for a woman." When God saw his labor, he took the *logismos* away from him, and he knew repose.

N 427

51. One of the elders once said about *porneia*, "Many are the passions of *porneia*," and he said that the Apostle says, "*Porneia*, impurity, and covetousness—let them not even be mentioned amongst you, as is fitting for saints [see Eph 5:3]. For *porneia* is to commit sin in the body; impurity is the titillation of the body, likewise laughter and loose talking. Often in conversation, whether it is because of the good, such as trying to put something right, or because of a fight, you commit the sin of impurity; then the passion is enflamed and warfare ensues. It begins with a discreet justification in favor of what is being said. A good brother lives in *hēsychia*; he acquires the confidence to eat and drink, but then goes on to coarser things, frequently saying what is common opinion and imitating the rest. If he lives with a brother, he is upset when he sees somebody talking to him, and he says, 'Why do you want to speak with

someone else?' Or, even if he is living alone and another brother comes by and sees him freely talking with him, again he is immediately troubled, saying, 'What do you want with him?' Then the soul becomes obsessed with these things matter and the reasoning power [*logismos*] is distracted from prayer and from the fear of God."[4]

52. He told how two brothers went to a village where they were sent, and five times the demon waged war on the older one to make him sin; but as he struggled, he offered a prayer every hour. When they returned to their own father, his face was troubled; he prostrated himself, saying, "Pray for me, Father, for I have fallen into *porneia*," and he explained how his mind had been embattled. Now the elder had the second sight, and he beheld five crowns above [the brother's] head; and he said to him, "Take heart, my son; when you came, I saw crowns above you. You were not overcome, but rather did you triumph, in that you did not perform the deed. It is a great struggle when one has the opportunity and remains continent. He gains a great reward because this onslaught of the enemy is stronger and sharper and it is difficult to escape his snares. Do you think in the case of the blessed Joseph that his action was easy [see Gen 39:7ff]? It was like something happening in a theatre: God and the angels were watching him struggle, the devil and the demons stimulating the woman to wilder passion. When the champion triumphed, all the angels gave glory to God with a loud voice, saying, 'The champion has won an uncommon victory.' So it is good not to do evil in the imagination. If one is tempted, let him struggle not to be overcome." N 454b

53. An elder said, "Observe these things until death and you shall be saved: not to eat with a woman; not to be friendly or to sleep on the same mat with a young man

[4] The sense of this passage is by no means clear.

when you are young yourself, except with your brother or with your fellow *abba*, and then with fear and without disdain; not to let your eyes wander when you are putting your clothes on. If it is unavoidable, accept up to three cups [of wine], and do not relax the injunction for friendship's sake. Do not live in a place where you have sinned against God. Do not despise your liturgy, so you do not fall into the hands of your enemies. Coerce yourself to meditating the Psalms—for this will defend you from falling captive to the enemy. Love all mortification and your passions will be brought low. Take care not to measure yourself in any matter, and endeavor to be sorry for your sins. Guard yourself against falsehood, for that will chase the fear of God away from you. Reveal your *logismoi* to your fathers so that the protection of God may overshadow you. Oblige yourself to perform the work of your hands and the fear of God will live in you."

HL 23

54. Somebody named Pachōn, who had lived to be about seventy years old, was living at Scete. Now it so happened that I, tormented by the demon of *porneia* and besieged by desire for a woman, was vexed by *logismoi* and night visions. Under this temptation I had come very close to leaving the desert, the passion drawing me very forcibly on, but I had not put the matter before the fathers who were my neighbors, nor before my teacher. Secretly I made my way out into the desert for fifteen days and encountered the fathers attached to Scete who had grown old in the desert. Amongst these I also chanced upon Pachōn, whom I found to be very sincere and ascetic. I confidently set before him what I had in mind, and that holy one said to me, "Do not let this matter dismay you; you are not suffering it on account of your negligence. The place, the scarcity of provisions, and there being no contact with females here witness in your favor. Rather does this endure against you because of the adversary's active aversion to virtue.

"The war against *porneia* has three aspects for those living in the desert. Sometimes the flesh attacks us for its own gratification, sometimes the passions attack through the *logismoi*, and sometimes the demon himself lords it over us out of jealousy. Having carefully observed many things, this is what I have discovered. Look, as you can see, I am an old man; I have spent forty years in this cell concerned about my own salvation. Yet even though I have come to this age, I am still tempted," and he declared, "For twelve years after I had gone fifty, he did not interrupt his attack on me by day or by night. I came to the conclusion that I was being tyrannized because God had abandoned me. I chose to die like a beast rather than to behave shamefully because of a bodily passion. Coming out of my cell, I was wandering in the desert when I found the cave of a hyena. I lay in that cave, naked, in the daytime, so that the beasts would devour me when they came out. When evening arrived, as it is written, 'The sun knows his going down. You made darkness and it became night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do move: lion cubs roaring to get their prey and to seek their meat from God' [Ps 103:20]. The beasts came out at that hour, a male and a female. They smelled me from head to foot, licking me; and just when I thought they would make meat of me, they went off and left me. All night I lay there and was not eaten.

"Thinking that God had certainly taken pity on me, I promptly went back to my cell. But after a few days' delay, the demon came at me again, more forcibly than before, so that I was almost at the point of blaspheming. He transformed himself into burnt-faced maiden whom I had once seen in my youth, gleaning at harvest time. It seemed as though she sat on my knees and so aroused me that I thought I had lain with her. In my rage I gave her a smack, and with that she became invisible. Believe me when I tell you that for two years I could not stand the stench of my hand. Discouraged

and by this even more despairing of myself, in the end I went out wandering in the vast desert. Finding a little asp, I took it and applied it to my genitals as being the cause of my temptation, so that I would die bitten like that. But when, by the providence of the grace of God, I was not bitten that way, afterward I heard a voice in my mind saying, 'Go back, Pachōn; fight on! This is why I allowed you to be tyrannized: it was so that you would not become boastful of having been able to get the better of this demon but would always go running for the help of God.' Reassured by this, I returned to my cell and confidently stayed in it. I was no longer concerned with the battle against woman mania; after that battle I lived in peace for the rest of my days, and when the demon saw how I despised him, in the end he was too ashamed to come near me."[5]

It was with these *logismoi* to fight against Satan that the holy Pachōn fortified me, preparing me to bear the pains more nobly. He easily chased away the battle against the demon of *porneia*; then he sent me on my way, exhorting me to be courageous in all things. I went away and remained [in my cell] concerned about my own salvation, giving thanks to God and to the holy one. Amen.

[5] *HL* 23 (written by Palladius, bishop of Hellenopolis) ends here.

6

Poverty [*Aktēmosynē*] and That It Is Necessary to Guard against Covetousness

1. A brother who had renounced the world and distributed his goods to the poor but kept back a little for himself visited Abba Antony. When the elder learned this, he said to him, "If you want to become a monk, go to such and such a village, buy some meat, and put it on your naked body; then come here like that." When the brother did that, the dogs and the birds tore his flesh. When he came back to the elder, he inquired whether it had happened as he had counseled. The other showed his lacerated body, and Abba Antony said, "They who have renounced the world and want to have money are cut up like this by the demons who are making war on them." Antony 20

2. Abba Daniel said of Abba Arsenius that there once came to him an officer[1] bringing him the testament of a senator related to him who had left him an exceedingly large inheritance. He took it and would have torn it up, but the officer fell at his feet, saying, "Do not tear it, or my head will be struck off." Abba Arsenius said to him, "I died before he did," and he sent it back, accepting nothing. Arsenius 29

3. There was a time when Abba Arsenius was ill at Scete and he needed only a little wheat bread. He had not the wherewithal to buy it, but he received alms from Arsenius 20

[1] *Magistrianos*, a military messenger.

somebody and said, "I thank you, my God, that you favored me to receive alms for your namesake."

Agathon 6

4. They recounted of Abba Agathon that he spent some considerable time building a cell with his disciples and that they eventually came to live there when they had completed the cell. The first week he saw something detrimental to him, and he said to his disciples, "Get up; let us go away from here." Deeply troubled, they said to him, "If you were really of a mind to move, why did we endure so much toil building the cell? People are going to be shocked and to say, 'Look, the unstable ones have moved on again!'" Perceiving their fainthearted-ness, he said to them, "If some are shocked, others will be edified, saying, 'Blessed are people like that; they moved for God and despised all.' So, let him come who wants to leave; for my part, I am going." They threw themselves to the ground, begging him until they were permitted to travel with him.

Agathon 7

5. He also said that he often changed location, carrying his sheepskin in a basket.

N 392; see 15.116, 117 below

6. An elder said that the only possession of one of the brothers was a gospel. He sold it and gave the proceeds to feed the poor, uttering this memorable statement: "I have sold that which says to me, 'Sell what you have and give to the poor'" [Mt 19:21].

Theodore of Phermē 1

7. Abba Theodore of Phermē possessed three fine books. Visiting Abba Macarius, he said to him, "I have three fine books and I benefit from them; the brothers borrow them and benefit [from them]. Tell me what I ought to have done." In answer the elder said, "The deeds are good, but poverty is greater than all." On hearing this he went and sold them, giving the proceeds from them to the needy.

John the Persian 2

8. One of the fathers told of John the Persian that he attained a most profound innocence by his great virtue. He

lived in Egyptian Arabia. One day he borrowed a piece of gold from a brother and bought some linen thread so he could work. A brother came to him, saying, "Lend me a little linen thread, Abba, so I can make myself a *leviton*," and he joyfully gave him [some]. Then another one came begging in the same way, saying, "Give me a little linen thread so I can make a towel"; he gave him [some] too. When others asked in the same way, he simply and gladly gave. In the end the owner of the piece of gold came, wanting it back. The elder said to him, "I'll bring it for you," but not having the wherewithal to give him the coin, he got up and went to Abba James the steward to ask him to give him the coin so he could give it back to the brother.

As he was going along, he found a piece lying on the ground, but he did not touch it; he offered a prayer and returned to his cell. Again the brother came wanting to get his coin, and he said to him, "I am certainly concerned with the matter." The elder went off again and found the coin lying on the ground where it was before. Again he offered a prayer and returned, and here came the brother again, importuning him. The elder said to him, "Forgive me just one more time, and I will bring you it." He got up and came again to that place and found [that coin still] there. Offering a prayer, he took it and came to Abba James. "Abba, I found this coin on the road as I was coming to you," he said to him. "Do me a favor and make it known in the district in case somebody lost it; and if the owner of it be found, give it [to him]." So the elder went and made it known for three days, but nobody was found who had lost it.

Then the elder said to Abba James, "If nobody has lost that coin, give it to such and such a brother, for I owe it to him, and it was while I was coming to you to get it from you as alms to pay back the loan that I found it on the road." The elder was amazed that being in debt and then finding [the wherewithal] he did not

immediately take it and give it back. And this was the amazing thing about him: if anybody came to borrow something from him, he did not provide it himself but said to the brother, "Go and help yourself to what you need." And if one brought something back, he would say to the brother, "Put it back where it belongs." And if one who was taking something brought nothing back, he would not say anything to him.

Isaac of The Cells 8

9. Some of the fathers recounted how a brother once came into the church at The Cells in the time of Abba Isaac wearing a little cloak,[2] and the elder chased him out, saying, "This is a place for monks; you who are a worldling cannot be here."

Isaac of The Cells 7

10. Abba Isaac used to say to the brothers, "Our fathers and Abba Pambo wore old, patched-up clothes made of palm fiber; now you are wearing expensive clothing. Go away from here and turn this location [back] into a desert." When they were about to go harvesting, he said to them, "I am not giving you any more instructions, for you do not observe them."

Isaac of The Cells 12

11. The same [*abba*] also told [us] that Abba Pambo used to say, "The monk ought to wear the sort of clothing that if he threw it out of the cell, nobody would take it."

Isidore 2

12. Abba Isidore said, "If you long for the kingdom, despise money and obtain the divine reward."

Isidore 3

13. He also said, "It is impossible for you to live a godly life if you love pleasure and money."

Cassian 7

14. Abba Cassian said that a senator renounced the world and gave his own money to the poor, retaining a little for his own comfort, for he was unwilling to embrace the humility of utter poverty and the conscious submission

[2] Probably "a garment of superior quality."

of the coenobitic rule. It was against him that Basil (now among the saints) uttered this saying: "You have lost out as a senator and have not made a monk."

15. A brother asked Abba Pistamon, "What am I to do, for I am embarrassed to go selling my handwork?" In reply the elder said to him, "Both Abba Sisoēs and the others used to sell their handwork. It does no harm; but when you are selling, say the price of the item once, then if you wish to lower the price a little, it is up to you. This way you will find repose." The brother spoke again, "If I have what I need from elsewhere, do you want me not to concern myself with handwork?" In reply the elder said to him, "However much you possess, do not abandon your handwork. Do what you can, only do it untroubled." Pistamon

16. A brother asked Abba Serapion, "Utter a saying for me." The elder said, "What am I going to say to you? That you took the goods of widows and orphans and set them in this casement?"—for he saw that it was full of books. Serapion 2

17. The blessed Synklētikē was asked whether poverty was a perfectly good thing. "It is a very good thing for those who are capable of it," she replied, "for they who endure it are afflicted in the flesh but are at rest in the soul. Just as stiff garments are washed and whitened by being trodden on and vigorously twisted, so the strong soul also gains in strength through voluntary indigence." Synklētikē 5

18. Abba Hyperechios said, "The monk's treasure is voluntary poverty; lay [it] up in heaven, brother [see Matt 6:19-20], for the ages of repose are limitless." Hyperechios 6

19. There was one of the saints living at Jerusalem named Philagrios who used to toil away at his handwork in order to provide his own bread. When he was standing in the marketplace to sell his own handwork, he saw that somebody had mislaid a purse containing Philagrios 1

a thousand pieces of gold. When the elder found it, he stayed right there, saying, "The one who lost it must come"; and just then the person came, weeping. The elder took him aside and gave him the purse. He took it and wanted to give [the elder] part of [its contents], but the elder would have none of it. Then [the fellow] began shouting out, "Come and see a man of God and what he has done!" but the elder quietly slipped away and went out of the city so it would not be known what he had done and so they would not revere him.

N 143a 20. An elder was asked by a brother, "Say, Abba, how am I to be saved?" Taking off his *leviton*, girding his loins, and hanging out his own hands, the elder said, "This is how the monk ought to be: stripped of the material of worldly goods and crucified in bouts of wrestling."

N 258 21. Somebody begged an elder to accept some money for his own needs, but he did not want to because the labor of his own hands sufficed. When the person persisted, begging him to take it even for the needs of the indigent, the elder replied, "That would be a double disgrace: I would be accepting what I do not need and vainly taking pride in giving away what belongs to another."

N 263 22. Some of the Greeks[3] once came to Ostrakinē to distribute alms; they took the stewards with them to show them who had the most pressing need. These brought them to a leper to whom they began giving, but he was unwilling to accept. "Look, I work at braiding these few palm fronds, and I eat my bread," he said. They next brought them to the cell of a widow with children. When they knocked at the door, her daughter inside (who was naked) answered them. The mother had gone away to work (for she was a laundress). They offered the daughter something to wear and a bit of money, but she was unwilling to take either, saying, "My mother

[3] *Hellēnes*, meaning pagans.

came and said to me, 'Cheer up, for God willed it and I found work today; so we shall have our food.'" When her mother came home, they begged her to accept [help], but she would not. "I have God to take care of me; do you want to take him away from me today?" she cried. They glorified God on hearing her faith.

23. A grandee from abroad came to Scete bringing a large amount of gold with him; this he entreated the priest to give to the brothers. The priest said to him, "The brothers are not in need," but when the other greatly importuned him, he placed the basket at the church door and said, "Let him take who is in need." Nobody came near it, while some did not even notice. The priest said to him, "God has found your almsgiving acceptable; go and give it to the poor." He went his way greatly edified. N 259

24. Somebody brought money to an elder, saying "Take this for your expenses; you are now old and sick"—he was in fact a leper. But he replied, "Have you come to deprive me of him who has sustained me these sixty years? Look, that is how long I have had my disease, and I never lacked anything because God was providing for and feeding me." He did not consent to take it. N 260

25. The elders told the story of a hard-working gardener who devoted all his earnings to almsgiving, retaining only so much as he needed for his expenses. Then his *logismos* put it to him, "Save up a little money for yourself in case you grow old, become distressed, or are in need of expenses." He began saving and filled a jar with money. Then it transpired that he fell ill: his foot was suppurating. He exhausted his money on physicians and reaped no benefit [see Mark 5:26]. Finally there came to him an experienced physician who said to him, "Unless somebody amputates your foot, your whole body is going to suppurate," so he decided that his foot should be sawed off. N 261

That night [the gardener] came to himself and repented of what he had done. Sighing, he said, "Lord,

remember the good works I used to do, laboring away and providing for the brothers." As he was saying this, an angel of the Lord appeared and said to him, "Where is the money you saved up? Where is the hope you treasured?" Then, on reflection, he said, "Lord, I have sinned; forgive me, and henceforth I will do nothing of the kind again." Then the angel touched his foot, and he was immediately healed. Getting up early in the morning, he went to the field to work.

When the physician came, as agreed, with the instruments to saw off the foot, they said to him, "He went out early to work in the field." Then the physician went, astonished, to the field where he was working. Seeing him turning the earth with his spade, he glorified the God who had given him health.

N 262 26. A brother asked an elder a question: "Do you want me to retain two pieces of gold for myself in case of bodily sickness?" Perceiving that, in his *logismos*, the brother wanted to retain them, the elder said to him, "Very well." But the brother was troubled by his *logismoi* when he got back to his own cell, saying, "Did the elder tell me the truth or not?" So he got up and went to the elder again. Prostrating himself before him, he said, "For the Lord's sake, tell me the truth, for I am troubled by my *logismoi* concerning the two coins." "It was because I realized that you wanted to retain them that I said that to you," the elder said to him. "But it is not good to retain more than is required for the needs of the body. Those two coins, if you hold on to them, your hope will be found to be in them. And if they chance to get lost, God will no longer take care of us. Let us therefore cast our worries upon the Lord, for he cares for us [see Ps 54:23]."

27. At Scete they used to say of Abba Moses that when he was about to go to Petra[4] he would exhaust himself

[4] *Petra* can also mean "the rock" or even "a cave."

traveling there. He would say to himself, "How can I bring my water in here?" and a voice came to him, saying, "Come in and do not worry about anything," so in he went. Then some of the fathers visited him, and he had only one small vessel of water, which he used up boiling a few lentils. The elder was distressed; while going in and out, he was praying to God, and here a rain cloud came over Petra, and in this way he filled all his vessels. After that, the visiting fathers said to him, "Tell us why you were coming in and going out." The elder said to them, "I was pleading before God, saying, 'You brought me here, and look—I do not have water so your servants can drink,' and that is why I was coming in and going out, beseeching God until water was sent to us." Moses 13

28. Abba Silvanus said, "I am a servant, and my master said to me, 'Do my work and I will feed you; do not ask where from. Whether I possess it or steal it or borrow it, do not ask; just work—and I will feed you.' So if I work, I eat from my wages; if I work not, I eat charity." Silvanus 9

7

Various Narratives Preparing Us for Patience and Courage

Antony 1

1. Once when the holy Abba Antony was residing in the desert, he was overcome by *accidie* and a great darkening of *logismoi*, and he said to God, "Lord, I want to be saved, and *logismoi* will not leave me alone. What am I to do in my affliction? How can I be saved?" Going outside [his cell] a little way, Antony saw somebody sitting, working like himself, then standing up from the work and praying, sitting down again, working at rope braiding, then standing to pray once more. It was an angel of the Lord sent to correct Antony and to assure him. And he heard the angel saying, "Act like this, and you shall be saved." He experienced much joy and courage on hearing this, and acting in that way, he was being saved.

Agathon 13

2. A brother asked Abba Agathon, "An order reached me, and there is a battle for me in the place indicated by the order. I am willing to go according to the order, but I am afraid of the battle." The elder said to him, "If it were Agathon, he would carry out the order and win the battle."

Ammonas 3

3. Abba Ammonas said, "I have spent fourteen years at Scete beseeching God night and day that he would grant me to overcome wrath."

Bessarion 6

4. Abba Bessarion said, "Forty nights I remained standing among thorns without sleeping."

Benjamin 5

5. Abba Benjamin would say to his disciples, "Travel the imperial road [see Num 20:17; 21:22] and count the mileposts."

6. Saint Gregory [of Nazianzus] said, "If you were hoping [to encounter] nothing difficult when you were about to embark on philosophy [i.e., the monastic profession], the commencement was unphilosophical and the instructors culpable. If [difficulty] was expected but not encountered, that was a blessing; but if it was encountered, either suffer and bear it or be aware that you are deceiving yourself."

7. Abba Isaiah said, "Blessed are they whose labors were executed with understanding. They reposed themselves from every burden and survived the villainy of the demons, especially that of cowardice that obstructs a person from [executing] every good work that is proposed and leads the mind into timidity if it devotes itself to waiting upon God."

8. He also used to say, "The first struggle of all is voluntary exile, especially in solitude. One who runs away to another place abandons his belongings, taking along perfect faith and hope and a heart steadfastly opposed to his own wishes; for [demons] besiege you in several dimensions. Terrifying you in many ways with talk of temptations, grinding poverty, and diseases, they pose the question, 'If you fall into something like these, what are you going to do, since you have nobody who knows you to take care of you?' And the goodness of God puts you to the test, to reveal your determination and your love for God."

Theodore of Phermē 2

9. A brother living in solitude at The Cells was troubled; he went to Abba Theodore of Phermē, telling him his own condition, and [Abba Theodore] said to him, "Go and humble your *logismos*; be submissive and live with others." He came back to the elder and said to him, "I

find no repose with other people either." The elder said to him, "If you find no repose either alone or with others, why did you come out to be a monk? Was it not to endure afflictions? Tell me now: How many years have you worn the habit?" "Eight years," he said, and the elder replied, "Right. Well, I have worn the habit for seventy years without finding repose for one day—and you want to have repose in eight years?"

Theodore of Phermē 24

10. A brother also asked him, "If a sudden catastrophe occurred, would you too be afraid, Abba?" The elder said to him, "If the sky were to cleave to the earth, Theodore would not be afraid." [The brother] had been praying God to take timidity away from him; that was why he asked him.

Theodore of the *Henaton*[1]

11. They used to say of Abba Theodore and Abba Lucius of the *Henaton* that they spent fifty years mocking their own *logismoi*, saying, "After this winter we are going somewhere else." When spring came round again, they would say, "After spring we are moving on"—and the ever-memorable fathers went on like that all their days.

John Colobos [the Short] 13

12. Abba Poemen said about Abba John the Short that he besought God, and the passions were taken away from him; he then became without a care. Going to an elder, he announced to him, "I see myself reposing, with no battle to fight." The elder said to him, "Go and beseech God for the battle to come upon you, for it is by [fighting] battles that the soul makes progress." The battle came, and he no longer prayed for it to be taken away; he said, "Lord, give me patience in the battles."

Gelasius 6

13. They used to say of Abba Longinus that he was often spurred by his *logismoi* to go off into the desert. One day he said to his disciple, "Do me a favor, brother:

[1] The ninth [*henaton*] milepost to the west of Alexandria.

whatever I do, put up with it and say nothing to me that week." He took a palm staff and began walking around in his courtyard. He sat a little when he was exhausted and then got up again and walked around. When evening fell, he said to his *logismos*, "He who walks around in the desert does not eat bread, only plants; but on account of your weakness, do you eat green vegetables." That done, he also said to his *logismos*, "The person in the desert does not sleep under a roof but in the open air; so you too do that." He laid himself down and slept in his own courtyard. When he had spent three days walking around in his monastery, eating a little endive in the evening and sleeping in the open air at night, he was exhausted. He rebuked the *logismos* that had spurred him on; he condemned it, saying, "If you cannot perform the deeds of the desert, remain in your cell with patience; weep for your sins and do not go astray, for the eye of God sees our deeds everywhere. Nothing escapes him, and he cooperates with those who are doing good deeds."

Macarius 4

14. Abba Macarius the Great was visiting Abba Antony at the mountain. When he knocked at the door, [Antony] came out and said to him, "Who are you?" "I am Macarius," he said, and [Antony] closed the door, went in, and left him. When he saw his patience, he opened up to him and, taking delight in him, said, "I have been wanting to see you for a long time, for I hear about you." He received him as his guest and gave him refreshment, for he was quite exhausted. When evening fell, Abba Antony steeped some palm fronds for himself; Abba Macarius said to him, "Let me steep some for myself too," and [Antony] said, "Steep [some]." He made a great bundle and steeped it. From evening on they sat braiding them, speaking about what is beneficial to the soul, and the cord went out of the window down into the cave. When the blessed Antony came in at dawn, he saw the extent of the cord of Abba Macarius, and he

was amazed; he kissed his hands, saying, "Much power comes out of these hands."

Macarius 13

15. The same Abba Macarius once went up from Scete to Terenouthis, and he went into a sepulcher to sleep. There were some old mummies of pagans there; he took [one] and put it under his own head as a pillow. The demons resented his audacity when they saw it; wishing to excite him, they called as though addressing a woman: "Hey, so-and-so, come to the baths with us." Another [demon] underneath him replied as though from the dead, "There is a stranger on top of me and I cannot come." But the elder was not excited; he confidently struck the mummy, saying, "Get up and go if you are able." The demons cried out with a loud voice when they heard this, saying, "You have conquered us," and they ran away, covered in shame.

Matoēs 1

16. Abba Matoēs said, "I prefer some light activity that lasts to one that is onerous at first and soon broken off."

Milesios 2

17. They recounted of Abba Milesios that while he was living in Persian territory with two disciples, two sons of the king who were blood brothers went out hunting as was their custom. They cast nets over a distance of forty miles so that if anything was found caught in the nets, they could kill it with spears. The elder was discovered with his two disciples, and when they saw him, hairy and looking formidable, they were flabbergasted. They said to him, "Tell us whether you are a man or a spirit." He said to them, "I am a sinful man, come out to weep for my sins and to worship Jesus Christ, the son of the living God." They said to him, "There is no God other than the sun, the fire, and the water"—which they revered—"so come and sacrifice to them." But he said to them, "Those are creatures and you are deluded; but I urge you to turn about and come to know the true God, the creator of everything." They laughed and said to him, "You mean the condemned and crucified one is

true God?" "Yes," said the elder, "the one who crucified sin and slaughtered death; I am saying he is true God."

After they had tortured him and his disciples, they tried to force them to sacrifice. They beheaded the two disciples after torturing them severely. When they had severely tortured the elder for some days, later on, using their skills, they placed him between them and started shooting arrows at him, one from in front, the other from the rear. The elder said to them, "Since you are of one mind to shed innocent blood, tomorrow, in a twinkling of an eye, at this time, your mother shall be dispossessed of her children and deprived of your love; for you are going to shed each other's blood with your own spears." Disregarding what he said, they went out hunting next day. When a deer ran out from the nets, they mounted their horses and ran to overtake her. They threw their spears and wounded each other in the heart, and they died, as the elder had said.

18. Abba Poemen said, "The mark of the monk becomes apparent in temptations." Poemen 18

19. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "Why is it that my heart is weakened when it discovers that I am a little weary?" The elder said to him, "Are we not amazed at Joseph when he was but a youth in Egypt, an idolatrous land, how he endured temptation and God glorified him in the end? We see that Job too did not give up cleaving to God right to the end, and the enemy was unable to shake his hope in him." Poemen 102

20. He also said that Abba Isidore, the priest of Scete, once spoke to the people, saying, "Brothers, was it not for adversity that we came to this place? Now there is no longer adversity, so I am packing up my sheepskin and going where there is adversity. I will find repose there." Poemen 44

21. Paul the Great, the Galatian, said, "A monk who has few needs in his cell but goes out to concern himself Paul the Great 1

with other [needs] is the demons' laughingstock. I too have experienced this."

Synklētikē 6

22. The blessed Synklētikē said, "If you are in a dwelling that is a *coenobion*, do not move to another place: you will be severely harmed. Just as the bird that gets up from her eggs makes them infertile and barren, so the faith of the monk or the virgin who moves from place to place becomes chilled and dead."

Synklētikē 7

23. She also said, "The goads of the devil are many. If he did not shift a soul by penury, he brings up affluence as bait. He did not succeed with injuries and insults? He sets forth praise and glory. He was worsted by health? He makes the body sick. When he is unable to lead astray with pleasures, he endeavors to turn the soul aside through involuntary pains. He brings some very severe illnesses on demand to obfuscate those who through them became fainthearted in their love for God. But even if the body is lacerated and is burning up with gravest fevers and furthermore is vexed by unmanageable thirst, if you undergo these things as you are a sinner, call to mind the chastisement that is to come, the eternal fire, the judicial punishments, and do not be fainthearted in present conditions but rejoice that God has regarded you and keep that saying of praise on your tongue: 'The Lord has chastened and corrected me, but he has not given me over unto death' [Ps 117:18]. Iron you were, but you are now shedding rust by means of fire.

"But if, on the other hand, you become ill when you are righteous, you are progressing from smaller things to greater ones. You are gold, but by means of the fire you have become yet more approved. An angel was given to you as a thorn in the flesh [see 2 Cor 12:7]? Be glad! Look whom you have come to resemble, for you have been considered worthy of Paul's part. Are you being tried by fever and chastened by cold? Well, the Scripture says, 'We went through fire and water, and then a place

of refreshment was made ready' [Ps 65:12]. You got to the first; wait for the second. As you practice virtue, cry out the words of holy David, for he says, 'Poor, in misery, and suffering am I' [Ps 68:30]. You will become perfect through these triple afflictions, for he says, 'You have set me at liberty when I was in trouble' [Ps 4:1]. Let our souls be trained even more in these exercises, for we see the adversary with [our] eyes."

Synklētikē 8

24. She also said, "If sickness troubles [us], let us not be sorrowful that on account of the sickness and the weakness of the body, we are not capable of standing to pray or to sing out loud. All this is aimed at purging our desires. For fasting and sleeping rough have also been prescribed for us on account of our most shameful pleasures. So if illness took the edge off these [desires], the reason [why] is superfluous. Why do I say superfluous? These death-bearing missteps are put to rest by illness as though by some greater and more powerful medicament. This is the great *askēsis*: to persevere in sicknesses, sending up hymns of thanksgiving to the Almighty. Are we losing our sight? Let us not take it badly, for we have got rid of the instruments of insatiable desire, while, with the inward eyes, we see the glory of the Lord as in a mirror. Are we going deaf? Let us be grateful for being completely rid of vain report. Are we afflicted in the hands? Yet we have our inward hands ready to engage in the battle against the enemy. Does sickness control your entire body? But with the inner man, health is on the increase instead."

25. She also said, "In the world, those who offend, even involuntarily, are cast into prison. As for us, let us imprison ourselves for our sins so that the self-imposed verdict will avert the chastisement that is to come. Do you fast? Do not make excuses due to sicknesses, because even those who do not fast fell into those kinds of sicknesses. Did you begin to do good? Do not stop

when the enemy blocks you, for he is himself negated by your patience. They who set out to sail unfurl the sails at first when they encounter a favorable wind but then undo it when an adverse wind comes at them; the sailors do not discharge the ship because the wind is against them. They wait quietly for a while or wrestle with the storm, then they sail on again. So it is with us; when an adverse wind is against us, let us complete our voyage without fear, having unfurled the cross instead of a sail."

Sarah 3

26. They said of Amma Sarah that she spent sixty years above the river and never peeped out to see the river.

27. Abba Hyperechios said, "Let there be a spiritual song [see Eph 5:19] in your mouth, and let meditation assuage the force of the temptations you encounter. A clear example of this is a heavy-laden traveler who beguiles the weariness of his journey with a song."

28. He also said, "We have to arm ourselves before temptations; thus we will clearly appear to be reliable when they occur."

N 192

29. An elder said, "If temptation comes upon a person, afflictions are multiplied against him from every side in order that he may lose heart and complain," and the elder told [this story]: "There was a brother at The Cells, and temptation came upon him. If anybody saw him, that person wished neither to greet him nor to bring him into the cell. If he was in need of bread, nobody would lend him [any], and when he came from harvesting, nobody invited him to church for the *agapē* as is the custom. On one occasion he had no bread in his cell when he returned from the harvest, yet, in spite of this, he gave thanks to God. Once God saw his patience, he removed the battle with the temptation from him, and look!—here, right away, there was somebody knocking at the door who had a camel from Egypt loaded with bread. The brother began to weep, saying, 'Lord,

am I not worthy to suffer a little affliction?' Once his temptation was passed, the brothers would detain him and entertain him in their own cells and in the church."

30. An elder said, "We are not progressing because we do not understand our own stature and do not have patience in the work we initiate but desire to acquire virtue effortlessly." N 297

31. A brother asked an elder, "What am I to do, for my thought [*cogitatio*] does not let me remain one hour in my cell?" The elder said to him, "Go back and stay in your cell, my son; work with your hands, pray to God without ceasing, and cast your thought [*cogitatum*] on the Lord so that nobody tempts you to come out of there."

And [the elder] told him this: "There was a youth, a worldling who had a father and who wanted to become a monk. Much as he begged his father to let him live as a monk [*conversari*], he would not agree. He only just agreed some time later at the request of some faithful friends; then that young brother went out and entered a monastery. Having become a monk, he began perfectly to perform all the monastic tasks and even to fast each day. He began to eat only every second day and even only once a week. His *abba* saw him and was amazed; he blessed God for his abstinence and toil. So it happened that, some time later, the brother began to beg his *abba*, saying, 'I beseech you, Abba, to give me leave, and I will go into the desert.' Said the *abba* to him, 'Do not think of it, my son; you are not capable of undertaking such toil and especially [not of withstanding] the temptations of the devil and his cunning. When temptation comes upon you, you will not find anybody there to offer comfort from the perturbations of the enemy that will be raised up against you.' But he began to ask more persistently that he permit him to go away, and his *abba*, seeing that he could not hold

him, offered a prayer and sent him on his way. Then he said to his *abba*, 'I ask you, Abba, to provide me with [people] to show me the way I ought to follow,' so [the *abba*] designated two monks of the monastery beside him, and off they went with him.

"After they had walked in the desert one day and the day after, they were fainting with the heat. Throwing themselves down, they lay on the ground and slept a little. And here there came an eagle, striking them with its wings. Then it went well ahead and perched on the ground. When they awoke they saw the eagle, and they said to [the brother], 'Look: your angel! Get up and follow it.' He got up, bid the brothers farewell, and followed it. He came to where the eagle was standing. Soon it rose up, flew one furlong away, and alighted again, and the brother followed it likewise. Again it flew and alighted not far off—and this went on for three hours. But then, as he was following it, the eagle went off to the right of him who was following it and did not reappear. Nevertheless, the brother followed it, and as he looked, he observed three palm trees, a spring of water, and a small cave. He said, 'Here is the place the Lord has provided in advance for me.' In he went and started to live there, eating dates for food and drinking water from the spring. He spent six years there all alone, seeing nobody.

"Then it happened: one day the devil came to him in the form of some elderly *abba* with an alarming face. The brother was afraid when he saw him; prostrating himself in prayer, he got up, and the devil said to him, 'Let us pray again, brother.' When they arose, the devil said, 'How long have you been here?' 'I have been here six years,' he replied, and the demon said to him, 'I had you for a neighbor and was not able to know until four days ago that you were living here. I too have a monastery not far from you, and it is now eleven years that I have not gone out of the monastery until this day on which I learned that you were living here, close to me.

I thought to myself, "I will go to that man of God and confer with him about what tends to the salvation of our soul." And this I say, brother: We make no progress remaining in our cells, for we do not partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, and I fear we will become alienated from him if we distance ourselves from this mystery. But I tell you, brother, that there is a monastery three miles from here that has a priest; let us go each Sunday or every second week and receive the Body and Blood of Christ, then return to our cells.'

"This diabolical argument pleased the brother; when Sunday came around, the devil came and said to him, 'Come on, let us go, for it is time.' Off they went and came to the aforementioned monastery where the priest was; they went into the church and gave themselves to prayer. When the brother rose from praying, he looked around and did not find the one who had brought him there. 'Where do you think he has gone?' he said. 'Could he have taken a walk to the public toilet?' He waited a long time, but [the other] did not come. After a while he went out and began to look for him. When he did not find him, he spoke to the brothers of the place, asking them, 'Where is the *abba* who came into the church with me?' They said to him, 'We saw nobody other than you alone.' Then the brother knew that it was a demon, and he said, 'See with what cleverness the devil got me out of my cell! And yet it does not affect me, for I have come for a good deed. I will receive the Body and Blood of Christ and so go back to my cell.' When the Eucharist was concluded in the church, the brother wanted to go back to his cell, but the *abba* of the monastery detained him, saying, 'We will not permit you to go back unless you take some refreshment with us.' So it was after he had eaten some food that he returned to his cell.

"Then it happened again: the devil came, [now] in the likeness of some young man of the world. He began

to inspect [the brother] from head to toe, saying, 'Is it he? Is it not he?' And he began to stare at him. The brother said to him, 'Why are you inspecting me like that?' but he said, 'I think you do not recognize me, but then how could you recognize me after so much time? I am a neighbor of your father, the son of so-and-so; was your father not called *x* and your mother named *y*? Were not the handmaids called *a* and *b*? Your mother and sister died three years ago; your father has only just died, and he made you his heir, saying, "To whom can I leave my property other than to my son, the holy man who renounced the world to follow God? I will leave him all my goods. Only let a person who has the Lord [with him] and knows where [my son] is tell him to come and realize all my property and let him disburse [the proceeds] to the poor, for my soul and for his." Many set out looking for you and found you not at all; but I chanced to come here for some business and recognized you. So, make no delay. Come, sell everything and do as you father wished.'

"In response the brother said, 'I ought not to return to the world.' Said the devil, 'If you do not come and the property depreciates, you will render an account before God eventually. What harm is there in me saying to you that you should come and (as a good administrator) disburse it for the poor and indigent, so that it not be removed by prostitutes and those who live in evil? What sort of an imposition is it to come and give alms for your soul, according to your father's wish, then to return to your cell?'

"Why say more? By persuasion he put the brother back in the world; he came as far as the town with him then left him. The brother wished to enter his father's house, thinking he was already dead, but there was his father himself coming out, alive. He saw [the brother] but did not recognize him. 'Who are you?' he said to him, but [the brother] was so disturbed he could not

answer a word. His father began asking him again where he was from; then, in his confusion, he said to him, 'I am your son,' and [the father] said to him, 'Why have you come back?' [The brother] was ashamed to tell him what had happened, so he said, 'Your love made me come back, for I longed for you,' and he stayed there. Before very long he fell into sexual sin [*fornicatio*], and although he was punished in many ways by his father, that unhappy fellow did not become penitent but remained in the world. And that is why I am telling you, brothers, that a monk should never, for any reason whatsoever, be persuaded by anybody ever to go out of his cell."

32. Some brothers came visiting a great elder in the desert and said to him, "How can you abide it here, Abba, and sustain this toil?" The elder said to them, "All the toil I endure in my time here cannot even be compared to one day of the torments that are in store for sinners in the age to come."[2] N 193

33. An elder said that those of old time did not readily leave their place other than for these three reasons: if somebody was found to have a grudge against them, and, when they were doing everything to cure him, they could not change him; if again they came to be held in esteem by many people; or if they fell into *porneia*. N 194

34. A brother said to an elder, "What am I to do, for my *logismoi* are afflicting me, saying, 'You can neither fast nor labor; at least go visit the sick, for that is love.'" Recognizing the sowings of the demons, the elder said to him, "Eat, drink, and sleep, only do not leave your cell, knowing that remaining patiently in the cell brings a monk up to what he should be." When he had lasted for N 195; see Arsenius 11

[2] The translation is from the Latin; the Greek text is corrupt.

three days of that, he was in *acēdia*; he found a few palm fronds, split them, and, again next day, began braiding them. When hunger assailed him, he said, "Look, here are a few more palm fronds; I will braid these and then eat." While he was working the palm fronds, he also said, "I am going to read a little and then eat." After he read, he said, "I shall recite a few psalms and then eat without worrying." With the help of God, he made progress, little by little, in this way until he came up to what he should be, and gaining confidence against his *logismoi*, he overcame them.

N 196 35. An elder was asked, "Why am I in *acēdia* when I am staying in the cell?" He answered, "Because you have not yet seen either the punishment that lies ahead or the repose for which one hopes. If you had really seen these things, even if your cell were filled with worms so that you were up to your neck in them, you would have been patient and not have been in *acēdia*."

N 197 36. The brothers were begging one of the elders to refrain from his great labors, but he said to them, "I am telling you, my sons, Abraham would have regretted not having struggled harder when he saw the great gifts of God."

N 198 37. A brother asked an elder, "My *logismoi* are roaming around, and I am afflicted," but he said to him, "Stay in your cell, and they will come back to you. Just as when an ass is tethered, her colt runs hither and thither, but no matter where it goes, it comes back to its mother, so too do the *logismoi* of one who waits patiently upon God in his own cell return to him again, even though they might roam around a little."

N 199 38. An elder was living in the desert at a distance of twelve miles from water. Once when he was coming to fill [his water pot], his spirit failed him and he said, "What is the use of this toil? I am going to live near to

the water." As he said this, he turned round and saw somebody following him, counting his footsteps. "Who are you?" he asked him. "I am an angel of the Lord," he said. "I was sent to count your footsteps and to give you the reward." The elder was much encouraged on hearing this. He became even more eager and installed himself five miles farther in.

39. The fathers used to say, "If temptation comes upon you in the place where you are living, do not to abandon the place where temptation came upon you; otherwise, no matter where you go, you will be confronted there by that from which you are fleeing. So wait patiently until the temptation is past so that there be no scandal attached to your withdrawal and that your departure does not occasion any offense to those who are living in the place." N 200

40. There was a brother living in *hēsychia* at a *coenobion* who would frequently be moved to anger. Said he to himself, "I am going away; I am withdrawing into solitude. When I have nothing to do with anybody and am in *hēsychia*, my passion will be quieted." So out he went and took up residence in a cave, alone. But one day when he had filled his bottle with water, he put it down on the ground, and it was suddenly overturned. He took it and filled it a second time, and again it was overturned. Then a third time he filled it and it was overturned. Losing his temper, he seized it and smashed it. When he came to his senses, he realized that he had been deluded by the demon, and he said, "Look here: I have withdrawn into a solitary existence and have still been overcome, so I am going back to the *coenobion*. Wherever you might be, there has to be a struggle, patient endurance, and the help of God." He got up and returned to his *coenobion*. N 201

41. "What am I to do, Father?" a brother asked an elder, "for I am accomplishing nothing that becomes a monk. I am very nonchalant; eating, drinking, and sleeping, N 202

I am beset by wicked *logismoi* and great confusion; I flit from one job to another and from *logismoi* to *logismoi*." The elder said, "Remain in your cell and do what you are able to do without getting distressed. In my opinion, the little that you accomplish here and now is comparable to the great deeds that Abba Antony used to accomplish in the desert. I believe that he who remains in his own cell for the name of God, keeping [a watch on] his own conscience, he too is located in the place of Abba Antony."

N 203 42. An elder was asked how the zealous monk could not be offended if he saw some [monks] returning to the world. He said, "You ought to watch hounds when they are hunting hares. When one of them spots the hare, he chases after it. The other hounds who only see the hound running in pursuit run too, for a while, but later they fall back from the chase. Only that hound which saw the hare pursues it until he catches up with it, not distracted from the aim of his running by the hounds that turn back. Nor does he care about ravines and undergrowth; even in the midst of thorns, in spite of many scratches, he does not stop. So does he who seeks Christ the Master keep the cross in mind without wavering, overcoming every offense he encounters until he reaches the crucified one."

N 204 43. An elder said, "In the same way that a frequently transplanted tree is incapable of bearing fruit, so neither will a monk who moves from place to place bear fruit."

N 374 44. The elders used to say, "The monk ought to struggle until death against the demon of *accidie* and negligence, especially at the time of *synaxes*. And if with God he succeeds in this, let him then turn his attention to the *logismos* of self-satisfaction and nonexertion, and let him say, 'Except the Lord build a house, those who build it labor in vain' [Ps 127:1], for 'all men are but dust and ashes' [Sir 17:32], and let him also recall that

'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'" [Jas 4:6; see Prov 3:34].

45. A brother so assailed by *logismoi* that he was about to leave the monastery reported this to his *abba*, but he said to him, "Go, stay in your cell; give your body as a warranty to the wall of your cell, and do not come out of there. Let your *logismos* think [*logizō*] what it likes, but do not put your body out of your cell." N 205

46. An elder said, "A monk's cell is the Babylonian furnace in which the three children found the Son of God [see Dan 3] and is the pillar of cloud from which God spoke to Moses" [see Exod 33:9]. N 206

47. One of the elders used to say of Lazarus the pauper [see Luke 16:19, 31], "He is not found to have practiced a single virtue. The only thing we find in him is that he never complained against the Lord for showing him no mercy but bore his affliction graciously. That is why God accepted him." N 376

48. A brother remained nine years under coercion to go out of his *coenobion*. Every day he made his sheepskin[3] ready to leave, but when evening fell, he would say to himself, "Tomorrow I shall get away from here." Then again at dawn he would say to his *logismos*, "Let us constrain ourselves to continue here this day too for the Lord's sake," and after he had completed nine years like that, God took the temptation away from him. N 207

49. A brother who fell into temptation was so afflicted that he abandoned the monastic way of life. When he desired to make a fresh start, he was so afflicted that he was prevented from doing so, saying to himself, "When will I ever get myself back to what I was?" He was discouraged and did not have the strength to begin the N 208

[3] *Mēlōtēs*, probably meaning "packed up his [few] belongings." See 7.57 below (N 215).

monastic task [again]. He went to an elder and told him about himself. On hearing about his affliction, the elder offered him an illustration like this: "There was a man who had a field, and as a result of his neglect, it was dried up, filled with rushes and thistles. In due course he decided to cultivate it, and he said to his son, 'Go and clean out the field.' His son went to clean it, but he was discouraged when he saw how many rushes and thistles there were, saying, 'When will I ever pull up all those [rushes] and clean up everything here?' He lay down and went to sleep and did likewise for many days. Then his father came to see what he had done. Finding that he had done nothing, he said to him, 'Why have you done nothing until now?' The young man said to his father, 'As soon as I began to work, Father, when I saw the quantity of rushes and thistles, I was overwhelmed by affliction and laid myself down to sleep.' Then his father said to him, 'My son, clear an area equivalent to your coverlet each day; that way the work will progress and you will not be discouraged.' On hearing this, the son did as he suggested, and, in short measure, the field was cleaned out. It is the same for you, brother; work little by little and you will not be discouraged; moreover, by his grace, God will restore you again to your former status." The brother went his way and patiently stayed in his cell, doing as he had been taught by the elder. Finding repose in this way, he made progress through Christ.

N 209 50. There was an elder who was continually sick and unwell, but one year he happened not to be sick. He was terribly upset and wept, saying, "God has abandoned me and has not visited me."

N 210 51. An elder said there was once a brother who was terribly assailed by *logismoi* for nine years, so much so that he despaired of his own salvation and condemned himself, saying, "I have lost my soul; and since I am lost, I am returning to the world." As he was leaving, there

came a voice to him along the way that said, "The nine years when you were assailed were your crowns. Return to your place, and I will relieve you of the *logismoi*." So do you see that it is not good to despair on account of *logismoi*? These in fact braid and secure crowns for us if we come through them unscathed.

52. There was an elder in the Thebaid living in a cave who himself had an experienced disciple. It was customary for the elder to instruct his disciple for his benefit each evening. After the instruction he would offer a prayer then send him to bed. One day, however, some devout worldlings, having seen the intensity of the elder's spiritual discipline, came visiting; he gave them some words of encouragement. When they left, the elder sat down again as usual in the evening after the *synaxis* to exhort the brother but fell asleep while he was speaking to him. The brother waited for the elder to wake up and offer the usual prayer for him. He was sitting there for some considerable time without the elder awakening and was tempted in his *logismoi* to go to bed before being dismissed. But he steeled himself, withstood the *logismos*, and stayed there. Again he was tempted but did not leave; seven times he was tempted in this way and withstood the *logismos*. Later on, when the night was well advanced, the elder awoke and, finding the disciple sitting there, said to him, "Have you not retired until now?" "No, because you did not dismiss me, Abba," he said. The elder said, "Why did you not wake me up?" but he said, "I did not dare wake you up for fear of annoying you." They stood up and offered the dawn worship, and, after the *synaxis*, the elder dismissed the brother. N 211

While he was sitting alone, [the elder] fell into a trance, and here there was somebody showing him a glorious place in which there was a throne with seven crowns above the throne. He asked the person who was showing him, "Whose are those?" He said to him, "They

are your disciple's; God granted him this place and the throne when he retired from the world, but he received the seven crowns this very night." The elder was astounded when he heard this; with reverent fear he summoned the brother and said to him, "Tell me what you did last night." "I beg your pardon, Abba. I did nothing at all," he said. Thinking that it was by way of being humble that the brother was not confessing, he said to him, "I am not going to let you go until you tell me what you did or what came into your mind last night." The brother was at a loss for what to say, for he was not aware of having done anything. But he said to the elder, "Pardon me, Abba, but I did nothing—unless it was that I was seven times tempted by *logismoi* to retire without being dismissed by you and did not go." As soon as the elder heard this, he knew that each time [the brother] resisted the *logismos* he was crowned by God, but he said nothing of this to the brother. He did, however, report it to the fathers for [their] benefit, so we might learn that God grants us crowns even for small considerations. So it is a good thing to coerce oneself in God's service. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" [Matt 11:12; see 1.16].

N 212 53. An elder living alone at The Cells happened to fall ill. Having nobody to care for him, he got up in his cell and ate whatever he found. He continued like this for several days, and nobody came to visit him. When thirty days had gone by with nobody coming to him, God sent an angel to care for him. When he had been there seven days, the fathers remembered the elder. "Let us go and see whether such and such an elder is sick," they said to one another. When they came and knocked, the angel departed. "Get away from here, brothers," the elder shouted from within, but they forced the door and went in. They began asking him, "Why are you shouting?" He said to them, "I was ailing for thirty days, and nobody came to see me; then here, seven days ago God

sent an angel to care for me, but the angel withdrew from me when you came," and, so saying, the elder died. The brothers were amazed; they glorified God, saying, "The Lord does not abandon those who put their hope in him."

54. An elder said, "Do not be discouraged if physical sickness comes upon you. Who are you to take offense if your Lord-and-master wishes you to be afflicted in your body? Does he not care for you in every way? Could you live without him? Resign yourself and beseech God to grant you what is appropriate, that is, according to his will; remain patiently [in your cell], eating charity." N 213

55. A monk who fought against Satan on every front had his eyes damaged by him. He did not pray to recover his sight but patiently endured [his blindness]. On account of his patient endurance, God granted him his sight, and he was able to see again. N 382

56. One of the fathers told [this story]: "While I was in Oxyrhynchos, some poor people came there one Saturday evening to receive alms. When they lay down to sleep, there was one of them there who had only one [rush] mat, half of it above and half underneath him. It was very cold at that time. As I went out to [make] water, I heard him moaning because of the cold, and he was comforting himself, saying, "'I thank you, Lord! How many rich men are now chained up in prison; how many others have their feet fastened in the stocks and cannot relieve themselves! Yet I am like an emperor, stretching out my feet, and I go wherever I want.'" I stood there listening while he said this. I told the brothers about it when I came in, and they were edified when they had heard it." N 214

57. A brother put this question to one of the fathers: "Supposing I am in a place where there is no one in whom I can confide, and an affliction comes upon me, N 215

what am I to do?" The elder said, "I believe in God that he himself will send you his grace and give you confidence if you call upon him in truth, for I heard that something of the sort happened at Scete. There was one fighting the good fight there who had no confidant to whom he could go. So, one evening, he got his sheepskin ready to leave, and lo and behold! during that night the grace of God appeared to him in the form of a maiden who besought him, saying, 'Do not depart anywhere, but stay a little with me, for contrary to what you have heard, no bad thing is happening.' Convinced, he stayed there, and immediately his heart was healed."

N 406

58. An elder said, "Just as an opponent fights in wrestling matches, so ought the wrestler (meaning the monk) to withstand his *logismoi*, stretching out his hands to heaven and calling on God for aid. Naked stands the wrestler in the stadium, naked and devoid of material goods. He anoints himself with oil and is instructed by his trainer how he should wrestle. Then comes the other wrestler to oppose him, sprinkling sand (meaning earth) on his person in order to get a better hold. Apply this to yourself, monk. God is the trainer, the one who provides the victory for us. We are the wrestlers; our opponent is the adversary. The sand is the business of the world; you perceive the device of the enemy. Stand then, devoid of material goods, and you shall win; for when the mind is weighed down by a material concern, it does not receive the holy and nonmaterial word."

59. An elder said, "Just as wax that has not been warmed or softened cannot take the [imprint of the] seal set upon it, neither can a person acquire the strength of Christ unless he has been tried by bouts of toil and sickness. It was for this reason that the Lord said to the oracular Paul, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness,' and that the Apostle himself boasts, saying, 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory

in my infirmities, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me'" [2 Cor 12:9].

60. The fathers related that there was a father of a *coenobion* and that it came about that the one who waited on him became fainthearted; he came out of the monastery and went away to another place. The elder kept going to him almost all the time, urging him to come back, but he would not. For three years the elder did this, and, convinced in this way, the attendant did return. So the elder told him to go out and gather straw, and after the attendant had done this, through the operation of Satan, he lost an eye. The elder was greatly distressed on learning of this and began comforting him in his pain. "It is my fault," said the attendant. "I have undergone this because of the troubles I gave you." Eventually the pain abated, but the condition remained. Again the elder told him to go out and pluck palm branches. As he was working, by the operation of the enemy, a small branch sprang back, and he lost the other eye. So he came to the monastery and practiced *hēsychia*, doing nothing more. But the *abba* was again distressed, and when his summons came, being aware of it beforehand, he called all the brothers together and said to them, "My summons is near; look to yourselves." They each began to say, "To whom are you leaving us, Abba?"—but the elder remained silent; he called for the blind monk and spoke to him about the summons. [The monk] wept, saying, "To whom are you leaving me, the blind man?" But the elder said, "Pray for me to be able to speak freely in the presence of God, and I hope that you will offer the *synaxis* on Sunday." When he died a few days later, [the monk] could see again, and he became father of the monastery. N 22

61. It was said of a certain saint that he bore witness to his faith during a persecution and was severely tortured; they even seated him on a burning hot throne of brass. N 469

Meanwhile, the blessed Constantine became emperor, and the Christians were set free. When this saint was healed, he returned to his cell. Seeing it from a distance, he said, "O dear, I am coming back again to many woes!" He said this referring to struggles and contests with the demons.

62. One of the fathers was staying in a location, living a good life. He had a brother who was the *hēgoumen* of a *lavra*. He said to himself, "Why am I staying, toiling away here? I am going away to my brother, and he can provide for my needs." He got up and came to his brother, who rejoiced when he saw him. That one said to him, "I want to stay here; give me a cell so I can be by myself," and he gave him [one]—but from that moment [the *hēgoumen*] forgot that [his brother] had come there. When the [brothers] of the *lavra* realized that he was the brother of the *hēgoumen*, they concluded that his brother would provide for his needs; so they did not bring him anything, nor did they invite him into a cell to give him even some bread. For his part, he was devout and did not trouble anybody. Then he thought to himself, "Perchance it is *not* the will of God that I stay here," so he took the key of the cell, brought it to his brother, and said to him, "Forgive me, but I cannot stay here." That one was amazed. "When did *you* come here?" he said, and the other said, "Was it not you who gave me the key of the cell?" His brother said to him, "Believe me, I did not remember that you came here; but, for the Lord's sake, tell me with what kind of *logismos* you came." That one said to him, "With the hope that I would be able to find repose near you." And his brother said to him, "So God quite rightly concealed it from me, for you do not have [your hope] in him but in me," and he got up and went to where he had been at first.

8

One Should Do Nothing for Show

1. Abba Antony once heard about a young monk who had worked a wonder on the road. When he saw some elders travelling and toiling along the road, he ordered some wild asses to come and carry them until they came to him. So the elders reported these things to Abba Antony, and he said to them, "To me that monk is like a vessel filled with all kinds of goods, but I do not know whether he will come into the harbor." Shortly after, Abba Antony suddenly began to weep, to tear his hair, and to lament. His disciples said to him, "Why are you weeping, Abba?" and the elder said, "A great pillar of the church just fell." He said this about the young monk. "But go to him," he said, "and see what has happened." So the disciples went off and found the monk sitting on a mat, weeping for the sin he had committed. On seeing the elder's disciples, he said to them, "Tell the elder to beg God to grant me just ten days; I hope to give an account of myself and repent"—then he died within five days. Antony 14

2. A brother was praised by some monks to Antony, but when [that brother] came to visit, [Antony] tested him whether he could endure dishonor. Finding that he could not tolerate it, he said to him, "You are like a village that is made beautiful in the front but pillaged by robbers at the back." Antony 15

3. They said of Abba Arsenius and of Abba Theodore of Phermē that they hated the glory of men above all shortcomings and that, while Abba Arsenius would not readily meet anybody, Abba Theodore would meet [a person], but he was like a sword. Arsenius 31

Eulogius

4. A person named Eulogius became the disciple of holy John the archbishop. He was a priest and an ascetic who used to fast two days at a time. He often went a whole week eating nothing but bread and salt; he was honored by the people. He visited Abba Joseph of Panepho expecting to find some greater austerity in him. The elder received him with joy and caused a refreshment to be made of whatever he had to hand, but Eulogius' disciples said, "The priest does not eat anything but bread and salt," but Abba Joseph kept quiet and went on eating. They stayed three days but did not hear them singing psalms or [offering] prayers (for their activity was hidden). So they went their way having reaped no benefit. By providence there was a mist; having lost their way, they came back to the elder, and before they knocked at the gate, they heard them singing psalms. They waited a long time, then knocked, and the elder received them with joy. On account of the great heat, those with Eulogius took the water bottle and gave it [to him], as he was thirsty. It [contained] a mixture of seawater and river water, and Eulogius could not drink. Coming to his senses, he fell down before the elder and begged to learn the reason for their way of life, saying, "What is this, Abba? At first you were not singing psalms; but now you are, after we left? And when I took the bottle to drink water, I found it salty?" The elder answered him, "The brother is a fool, and in his wandering [mind] he mixed it with seawater," but Eulogius begged the elder, wishing to learn the truth. Then Abba Joseph said to him, "That little cup of wine is for hospitality; but this water the brothers drink all the time." Then he taught him discernment regarding *logismoi*, and he detached all human concerns from him. [Eulogius] humbled himself and started eating whatever was put before him, and he too learned to perform his activity in secret. He said to the elder, "Your activity is really genuine."

Zēno 1

5. Abba Zēno, Abba Silvanus's disciple, said, "Never stay in a famous location nor remain with a person of renown, and do not lay a foundation where you can never build yourself a cell."

6. Abba Isaiah said, "I think it is a great and honorable thing to overcome vainglory and to advance in knowledge of God; for he who falls into the hands of the wicked passion of vainglory is alienated from peace and hardens his heart toward the saints. In the end of his evils, moreover, he falls in with haughtiness, which is pride, the mother of all evils. So do you keep your activity hidden, faithful servant of Christ, and take heartfelt care not to lose the reward of your activity through pleasing folk, for anybody who does something to impress folk has his reward, as the Lord said" [see Matt 6:2].

7. He also said, "One who wishes to be honored by folk cannot be devoid of envy, and one who is envious cannot find humble-mindedness. Such a person has delivered his own soul to his enemies; they drag it through many evils and destroy it."

8. He also said, "Flee from vainglory, and you will be accounted worthy of the glory of God in the age to come."

Theodore of Phermē 3

9. A brother once visited Abba Theodore of Phermē and spent three days imploring him to let him hear a saying, but he did not answer him, so he went out sorrowing. The elder's disciple said to him, "Abba, why did you not utter a saying for him? Look, he has gone off sorrowing." The elder said to him, "Of course I did not utter a saying for him; he is a dealer and likes to be honored for others' sayings."

Theodore of Phermē 7

10. Another brother asked him, "Abba, do you want me to eat no bread for a few days?" The elder answered him, "You are doing well; I too did it like that." The

brother also said to him, "I want to get my chickpeas to the bakery to make flour of them," and Abba Theodore spoke to him again, "If you are going to the bakery, make your bread; then what is the need of this outing?"

Theodore of Phermē 9

11. Another brother came to him and began to talk and inquire about things he had not yet put into practice. The elder said to him, "You have not yet found the vessel or loaded your goods, and, before setting sail, you have already entered that city. First practice the action, then you will attain the things of which you are now speaking."

Serapion 4

12. Abba Cassian said that a brother visited Abba Serapion, and the elder invited him as usual to offer a prayer, but he declined, saying that he was himself a sinner and unworthy of the monastic habit itself. [The elder] wanted to wash his feet, but he refused, using the same words. He made him eat something, and as they were eating, the elder began lovingly to admonish him, saying, "My son, if you want to receive benefit, remain in your cell, paying attention to yourself and to your handwork. It is not advantageous for you to come out, for there is nothing so beneficial as staying put." He was piqued on hearing that and changed his face so much that he was not able to hide it from the elder, so Abba Serapion said to him, "Hitherto you were saying, 'I am a sinner,' and accusing yourself of not even being worthy to live—and yet you became so angry when I lovingly reminded you [of it]. If you want to be truly humble, learn nobly to tolerate that which is said to you by another, and do not retain vain words for yourself." The brother prostrated himself before the elder on hearing this and went his way having reaped great benefit.

Moses 8

13. A ruler once heard of Abba Moses, and off he went to Scete to see him. When some folk reported the matter to the elder, he got up to run away into the marsh; but the ruler met him and said, "Tell us, elder, where is Abba Moses' cell?" "What do you want with him?" he said

to them; "he is a crazy fellow and a heretic." When the ruler came into the church, he said to the clergy, "I have heard about Abba Moses and have come to see him, and here an elder who was going into Egypt met us. We said to him, 'Where is Abba Moses' cell?' and he said to us, 'What do you want with him? He is crazy and a heretic.'" The clergy were sad when they heard this; they said to him, "What sort of a person was this elder who said these things against the holy one?" "He was a tall elder and dark, wearing old clothes," they said, and the clergy said, "That is Abba Moses! He said those things against himself because he does not want to meet you," and the ruler went his way having reaped great benefit.

Matoēs 1

14. A brother asked Abba Matoēs, "If I go and stay in some place, how do you want me to live there?" The elder said, "If you are living somewhere, do not be wanting to make a reputation for yourself, [saying], 'I do not come out for the *synaxis*,' or, 'I do not eat what is given to me,' for these create a hollow reputation, and later you will have trouble, for people go running to where they find such things."

Nistherios 1

15. Abba Nistherios the Great was walking in the desert with a brother when they saw a dragon and fled. The brother said to him, "Are you afraid too, Father?" The elder said, "I am not afraid, my son, but it was good for me to run away since I was unable to run away from the spirit of vainglory."

Poemen 5

16. The governor of the country once wanted to see Abba Poemen, but the elder would not consent to meet him. He arrested the son of [the elder's] sister on the pretext that he was a malefactor and threw him into prison, saying, "I will release him if the elder comes and intercedes for him." [The elder's] sister came weeping to his door, but he did not give her any answer at all. She reviled him, saying, "Steely hearted one, have mercy on me, for he is my only child." He sent someone to say to

her, "Poemen has not engendered children," and, with that, she went away. When the governor heard, he said, "I will release [the nephew] if [the elder] just says the word," but the elder sent back to him, "Try him according to the laws, and if he deserves to die, let him die; if not, do what you will."

N 671 17. Abba Poemen said, "Certainly he who seeks exclusively the friendship of folk distances himself from the friendship of God, so it is not a good thing to please everybody. 'Woe unto you,' he says, 'when all men shall speak well of you'" [Luke 6:26].

Poemen 63 18. He also said, "Teach your heart to observe whatever your tongue teaches."

Poemen 63 19. He also said, "Folk talk in terms of perfection without performing the least of its tasks."

Sisoēs 15 20. Abba Adelphios, bishop of Heliopolis, once visited Abba Sisoēs at the mountain of Abba Antony. When he was about to leave, [the elder] caused them to eat while it was still early; but it was a fast day. When he had laid the table, some [brothers] came knocking. The elder said to his disciple, "Give them a little porridge, for they are exhausted." Abba Adelphios said to him, "Wait a little so they do not say that Abba Sisoēs eats early in the morning." The elder heeded him but said to his disciple, "Go and give [it] to them." However, when they saw the porridge, they said, "Perhaps you have guests, and perhaps the elder is eating with you too?" "Yes," said the brother. They began to be troubled and to speak like this: "God forgive you for allowing the elder to eat at this hour, or do you not know that he has to inflict himself with hard labor for many days?" The bishop heard this; he prostrated himself before the elder, saying, "Forgive me, for I was thinking in a human way, but you were doing what God wills." Abba Sisoēs said

to him, "Unless God glorifies somebody, people's glory is nothing."

21. Abba Amoun of Raïthou asked Abba Sisoēs, "When I am reading Scripture, my *logismos* wants to compose a fine speech so that I have an answer to questioning." The elder said to him, "There is no need for that; do you rather acquire the ability to think and speak out of the purity of the mind." Sisoēs 17

22. A governor once came to see Abba Simon, but he, when he heard, put on his belt and went up into a palm tree to prune it. Those who came shouted out, "Elder, where is the anchorite?" but he said to them, "There is no anchorite here." They went away when he said this. Simon 1

23. On another occasion, another governor came to see him. The clergy took the initiative and said, "Abba, prepare yourself, for the governor has heard of you and is coming to be blessed by you." "Yes," he said, "I am preparing myself." Wearing his ragged old clothes, he took bread and cheese in hand, went out to the gate, and sat there eating. The governor came with his retinue, and when they saw him, they reviled him, saying, "This is the anchorite of whom we heard?" They immediately turned around and left. Simon 2

24. Holy Synklētikē said, "As treasure that comes to light is dissipated, so virtue made known and publicized disappears. As wax is melted when confronted by fire, so the soul is dissolved by praises and loses its intensity." Synklētikē S3

25. She also said, "As it is not possible to be both plant and seed at the same time, so it is impossible for us to produce heavenly fruit with earthly glory all about us." Synklētikē S4

26. Once there was a festival at The Cells, and the brothers were eating in the church. There was a brother present who did not eat anything cooked. One of the N 256

brothers said to the attendant, "Such and such a brother does not eat anything cooked, only salt[ed food]." Then the server called out to another brother in the hearing of everybody, "Such and such a brother does not eat anything cooked, so bring him a salt[ed dish]." One of the elders stood up and said to him, "It would be better for you to be eating meat in your cell today and not to hear that shout in the presence of the assembled company."

N 257 27. A brother, an ascetic who ate no bread, visited a great elder. There were other guests there, and the elder cooked a little food for them. When they sat down to eat, the brother who was an ascetic set for himself alone chickpeas softened by steeping and began eating [them]. When they got up, the elder took him aside and said to him, "Brother, when you visit somebody, do not make a show of your way of life. If you want to maintain your way of life, stay in your cell and do not come out at all." Convinced by the elder's word, the brother began compromising when he met with brothers.

N 672 28. They said of them at Scete that if anybody came upon their activity, they would no longer regard it as virtue but as sin.

N 673 29. An elder said, "Pleasing people removes all the [spiritual] fat[1] from a person and leaves him dried out."

30. He also said, "The one who makes a show of his good works and publicizes them is like the one who threw seeds on the ground, 'and the fowls of the air came and devoured them up' [Matt 13:4]. But the one who conceals his way of life is as one who sows in a furrow in the ground and who will reap an abundant harvest."

Ōr 14; N 320 31. An elder said, "Either make a clean break with humankind or make a fool of yourself, mocking humans and the world."

[1] *Piotēs*; see Ps 62:6.

32. One of the fathers said that along the river near the village in Palestine where the blessed Silvanus was living, there dwelt a brother who was pretending to be insane. Whenever a brother met him, he would immediately laugh, so each one would leave him and go away. Now it happened that three of the fathers came to visit Silvanus, and, after offering a prayer, they asked him to send somebody with them so they could see the brothers in their cells. "Of your charity, please tell the brother to take us to them all," they said to him. In their presence the elder told the brother, "Take them to all the fathers," but privately he told him, "See that you do not take them to the brother who is a fool, so they not be offended." As they were going round the cells of the brothers, the fathers said to their guide, "Of your charity, take us to them all." "Very well," he said to them, but, according to the elder's instruction, he did not take them to the cell of the fool.

N 408; see John of Maiouma, *Plerophoriai*, ed. F. Nau, *PO* 8 (1912):178–79

When they came back to the elder, he said to them, "Did you see the brothers?" "Yes," they said, "and we thank you, but we are sad on this account: that we did not go to them all." Addressing the one who had taken them, the elder said, "Did I not tell you to take them to everybody?" "That is what I did, Father," the brother said. When the fathers were coming out again, they said to the elder, "We are truly grateful for having seen the brothers; but the one thing that saddens us is this: that we did not see them all." At that point the brother privately said to the elder, "I did not take them to the brother who is a fool."

When the fathers went away, having turned the matter over in his own mind, the elder went to that brother who was pretending to be insane. He quietly lifted the latch without knocking and took the brother by surprise. He found him sitting on a bench with two baskets, one on the left and one on his right. When he saw the elder, the brother began to laugh as usual. "Stop that now and

tell me what you are doing in here," the elder said—and he began to laugh again. Abba Silvanus said to him, "You are aware that I do not come out of my cell except on Saturdays and Sundays. But now I have come to you midweek, for my God has sent me to you." Afraid now, the brother prostrated himself before the elder and said to him, "Forgive me, Father; in the morning I sit with these pebbles before me, and if a good *logismos* comes into my mind, I throw a pebble into the right-hand basket. If an evil one presents itself, I throw [a pebble] into the left-hand basket. In the evening I count the pebbles, and if there are more in the right-hand basket, I eat. If there are more in the left-hand basket, I do not eat. Next day, if an evil *logismos* comes to me, I say to myself, 'Watch what you are doing, or you will not be eating again.' Abba Silvanus was amazed when he heard this and said, "In truth, those fathers who came visiting were holy angels wishing to make the brother's virtue known; I experienced great joy and spiritual delight in their presence."

9

One Should Guard against Judging Anybody

1. A brother once happened to experience temptation at the *coenobion* of Abba Elit. Expelled from there, he went to the mountain of Abba Antony, and after he had stayed with him for some time, [Antony] sent him back to the *coenobion* out of which he had come; but when they saw him, they expelled him again. Back he went to Abba Antony, saying, "They refused to accept me, Father." So the elder sent [him] to them, saying, "A vessel was sailing the high seas and lost its cargo; but, with great effort, it came safely to dry land. Do you want to wreck that which has come safely to dry land?" When they heard that Abba Antony had sent him, they immediately accepted him. Antony 21

2. A brother who sinned was put out of the church by the priest. Abba Bessarion got up and went out with him, saying, "I too am a sinner." Bessarion 7

3. Abba Isaiah said, "If a *logismos* comes to you to pass judgment on your neighbor for some sin, first bear in mind that you are more of a sinner than he is. Do not believe the good you think you are doing pleased God, and you will not dare to pass judgment on your neighbor."

4. He also said, "In not passing judgment on one's neighbor and in belittling oneself—that is where repose of the conscience is located."

5. Visiting a *coenobion*, Isaac the Theban saw a brother who had slipped up and he passed judgment on him. Isaac the Theban 1

When he went out into the desert, an angel of the Lord came and stood before the door of his cell, saying, "I am not to let you in." He began to entreat him, saying, "What is the matter?" In answer the angel said to him, "God sent me to you, saying, 'Tell him, "Where do you bid me to put the brother who slipped up?"'" Abba Isaac immediately prostrated himself, saying, "I have sinned; forgive me!" "Get up," said the angel. "God has forgiven you; but take care in the future not to pass judgment on anybody before God passes judgment on him."

Mark the Egyptian

6. They used to say of Mark the Egyptian that he remained for thirty years and never came out of his cell. The priest was in the habit of coming and celebrating the Eucharist for him, but when the devil saw the man's virtuous patient endurance, he contrived to put him to the test. He arranged for somebody possessed of a demon to go to the elder, supposedly for prayer. Before he said anything else, the possessed one called out to the elder, saying, "Your priest is a sinner," and, "Do not let him come to you any more." But Abba Mark said to him, "My son, it is written, 'Judge not, that you be not judged' [Matt 7:1]. Even if he is a sinner, God forgives him. I am more of a sinner than he is." On saying this, he offered a prayer, chased the demon out of the fellow, and made him whole. When the priest came as usual, the elder received him with joy, and when God saw the innocence of the elder, he showed him a sign. When the priest was about to take up his position before the Holy Table, in the elder's own words, "I saw an angel coming down from heaven; he placed his hand on the head of the cleric, and as he stood for the Holy Offering, the cleric became a pillar of fire. Astonished at the sight, I heard a voice saying to me, 'Fellow, why are you astonished at this action? If an earthly emperor does not allow his grandees to stand in his presence in dirty clothes but [insists on] fine array, how much more so will the Divine Power purify the ministers of the Holy Mysteries

standing before the Heavenly Glory?'" Blessed Mark was counted worthy of this grace because he did not pass judgment on the cleric.

Moses 2

7. At Scete a brother had slipped up, and a council was held. They sent for Abba Moses, but he refused to come. So the priest sent for him, saying, "Come, for the company is waiting for you." He got up and came; he took a basket with many holes, filled it with sand, and carried it [with him]. Coming out to meet him, they said to him, "What is this, Father?" and the elder said to them, "My sins are running out behind me, and I do not see them—yet here I have come today to pass judgment on the faults of another!" They said nothing to the brother when they heard this, but they forgave him.

Joseph of Panephō 2

8. Abba Joseph asked Abba Poemen, "Tell me how I can become a monk." Said the elder to him, "If you want to find repose here and in the age to come, say in every situation, 'I, who am I?' and do not pass judgment on anybody."

Poemen 64

9. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "If I see a fault in my brother, is it good to cover it up?" The elder said, "Whenever we cover up our brother's fault, God covers up ours, and whenever we reveal the brother's, God reveals ours."

Poemen 6

10. A brother in a *coenobion* once slipped up. Now there was an anchorite in those parts who had not emerged for a long time. The *abba* of the *coenobion* went to him and told him about the brother who had slipped up. "Expel him!" he said. When he was expelled from the *coenobion*, the brother threw himself into a wadi in great despair and was weeping there. Some brothers passing by on their way to [see] Abba Poemen heard him weeping. Going in[to the wadi] with great difficulty, they found him and exhorted him to [let them] take him to Abba Poemen, but he refused, saying, "This is where

I am dying, for I have sinned." When they got to Abba Poemen, they told him about the brother, and when the elder had exhorted them, he sent [them], saying, "Tell him, 'Abba Poemen is calling you.'" They went and brought him, and when the elder saw him so afflicted, he got up and embraced him; with a smile, he invited him to eat with him.

Then Abba Poemen sent one of his brothers to that anchorite, saying "On hearing about you, for many years I have desired to see you, but on account of the hesitation on both our parts we have not met each other. So now, it being the will of God and an occasion presenting itself, trouble yourself to come here, and let us see each other." Now the anchorite used not to go out of his cell, but on hearing these words he said, "Unless God convinced the elder, he would not have sent to me." He got up and went to him. They embraced each other joyfully then sat down. Abba Poemen said to him, "Two men were in a place, and each had a corpse. One of the men left his own corpse and went to weep for the other's." The elder was pricked in his conscience by this tale when he heard it and recalled what he had done. He said, "Poemen is high as the heaven; I am as low as the earth."

11. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "What am I to do, for I am becoming negligent, staying in my cell?" The elder said to him, "Do not belittle anybody, do not pass judgment on anybody, do not slander—and God will grant you repose; then your staying [there] will be untroubled."

John Colobos 15

12. A brother asked Abba John Colobos, "How is it that my soul (that bears wounds) is not ashamed to slander its neighbor?" The elder told him a parable about slandering: "There was a man who was poor, and he had a wife. Seeing another [woman] who could be persuaded, he took her too; both were naked. Now there was a fair

somewhere, and they begged him, saying, 'Take us with you.' He took them both, put them into a barrel, got into a boat, and came to the fairground. When it became hot and people were resting, one of the women peeped out and, seeing nobody, ran to the rubbish dump, gathered together some old rags, and made herself a skirt; then she boldly paraded around. But the other woman, staying naked inside [the barrel], said, 'Just look at that whore! She has no shame to walk around naked!' Her husband was annoyed; he said, 'Heavens above! At least she covers her unseemliness; are you, totally naked, not ashamed, speaking like that?' It is like that with slandering."

13. Once there was a council at Scete, and the fathers were talking about a brother who slipped up; but Abba Pior remained silent. Later on he got up and went out. He took a sack and, filling it with sand, carried it behind him. He took a small basket, put some sand in it, and carried it in front of him. When he was asked by the fathers what this was meant to be, he said, "This sack, the one with a lot of sand in it, is my transgressions (and many they are) that I have left behind—because I do not trouble to weep over them. And here this little basket in front of me is my brother's transgressions; by meditating on them, I am passing judgment on my brother. I should not act so but rather carry my own sins before me and care about them, beseeching God to forgive me them." When they heard this, the fathers said, "Truly, that is the way of salvation." Pior 3

14. Abba Paphnutius said, "One day when I was travelling the road, I lost my way because of the fog and found myself near a village. I saw some people having shameful conversation. I quickly turned away, threw myself down, and condemned myself before God. And here an angel bearing a sword came and said to me, 'Paphnutius, all who pass judgment on their brothers will perish by Paphnutius 1

this sword. But you did well, since you did not pass judgment but humbled yourself before God, as though you had committed the sin. For this reason, your name has been inscribed in the book of life.'"

N 11; Theodotus 1

15. An elder said, "Judge not the one who indulges in *porneia* even if you are chaste [yourself], for in so doing, you too transgress the law—because he who said, 'Do not indulge in *porneia*' [see 1 Cor 10], also said, 'Do not judge'" [Matt 7:1].

N 254

16. A priest used to visit an anchorite and offer the Holy Mysteries for him. Somebody came to the anchorite and said to him slanderously that the priest was a sinner. When he came as usual to offer the Eucharist, the anchorite took offense and would not open [the door] to him. The priest went, and just then there came a voice from God that said to the anchorite, "People have usurped my judgment." Falling into a trance, he saw a golden well with a golden bucket and a golden cord; the water was very good. Then he saw a leper drawing water and transferring it. The anchorite wanted to drink, but he was not drinking because he who drew [the water] was a leper. Then there came a voice to him again: "Why are you not drinking of the water? What does it matter who is the one that draws it? All he does is draw it and transfer it." When the anchorite came back to his senses, he realized the meaning of the vision. He called for the priest and had him make the offering of the Holy Mysteries for him as before.

N 327

17. One of the fathers wept bitterly when he saw somebody sinning, saying, "Him today; me tomorrow."

N 255

18. There were two brothers of exemplary life in a *coenobion*, each of whom had been found worthy to see the grace of God [resting] on his brother. It once came about that one of them went out of the *coenobion* on a Friday. Seeing a person eating in the morning, he said to him,

"You are eating at this hour on a Friday?" There was a *synaxis* the following day; when his brother looked his way as usual, he saw the grace of God had withdrawn from him, and he was distressed. When they came into their cell, he said to him, "What have you done, brother, for I did not see the grace of God [resting] on you as before?" "I am not aware of having done any evil thing, either in deed or in *logismoi*," he replied. "You did not even say anything?" his brother said to him. Then [the other] remembered and said, "Yes; I saw somebody eating yesterday morning, and I said to him, 'You are eating at this hour on a Friday?'—that is my sin. But join me in a two-week exertion, and let us beseech God to forgive me." They did so, and after two weeks, the brother saw the grace of God had come upon his brother again. They were reassured and offered thanks to God who is good.

19. An elder said, "Should somebody sin in your presence in any way, judge him not but regard yourself as more sinful than him. You see the sin, but you do not see the repentance." N 327

20. Abba Poemen once came into the region of Egypt to dwell there, and there happened to be a brother living near him who had a wife. The elder was aware of this but did not ever condemn him. Now it happened that she gave birth one night, and, perceiving this, the elder called his junior brother, saying, "Take a measure of wine with you and give it to the neighbor, for today he is in need." His brothers were unaware of the matter, but he did as the elder told him to do. The brother [his neighbor] benefitted; he was conscience stricken, and, a few days later, he dismissed the woman (giving her whatever she needed). Then he came and said to the elder, "As of today I am repenting, Abba." He came and built himself a cell near the elder and often went to him; the elder lighted him along the way of God and gained possession of him.

Poemen 113

21. Some of the fathers asked Abba Poemen, "If we see a brother sinning, do you want us to condemn him?" The elder said to them, "For my part, even if I am obliged to pass that way and I see him sinning, I walk on and do not condemn him."

Poemen 114; see 4.36b

22. He added this: "It is written, 'Bear witness to that which your eyes have seen' [Prov 25:8], but I say to you that even if you touch it with your hands, do not bear witness, for a brother was deceived in some such thing: he saw his brother as though he were sinning with a woman. Deeply embattled, he went up and nudged what he thought was them with his foot, saying, 'Just stop it now'; and here 'they' were found to be sheaves of wheat. That is why I said to you that even if you touch it with your hands, you are not to condemn."

N 462

23. There was an anchorite who became a bishop. Of his piety, he reprimanded nobody but used to tolerate everybody's faults with long-suffering patience. Now his steward was not administering the church's affairs in a correct manner; there were those who asked the bishop, "Why do you not reprimand the steward for being negligent like that?" but the bishop postponed the castigation until next day. So those who were critical of the steward came to him inciting him [to take action], but when he learned of this, the bishop hid himself somewhere. When they arrived, they could not find the bishop. They learned from those close to him where he was hiding, and when they found him, they asked him, "Why did you hide yourself?" He said, "Because you want to deprive me in two days of what it took me sixty years of praying to God to get right."

N 20

24. There was an elder who used to eat three dried loaves each day. A brother visited him, and when they sat down to eat, [the elder] set three dried loaves before the brother. Perceiving that [the brother] was in need [of more], the elder brought him three more. Once they

were satisfied and had got up, the elder condemned the brother, saying to him, "Brother, we should not be slaves to the flesh"; the brother [simply] prostrated himself before the elder and went out. Next day, when it was time for the elder to eat, he put out three dried loaves for himself as usual. He was still hungry when he had eaten them, but he restrained himself. He had the same experience next day too, and he began to grow weak. Then the elder perceived that an abandonment by God had happened to him. Throwing himself prostrate before God in tears, he besought him about the abandonment that had happened to him, and he saw an angel saying to him, "This came upon you because you condemned the brother. Bear in mind that one who is able to restrain himself or to do any other good thing does not do it by virtue of his own strength: it is the grace of God that empowers the person."

25. A brother asked one of the elders to give an opinion on a hypothetical question. "Suppose I see somebody doing something, and I describe it to somebody else," he said. "In my opinion, I am not passing judgment. We are only talking [about it], so it is not slander, even in the *logismos*." The elder said, "If you have a passionate impulse, then it is slander. But if one is free of passion, it is not slander. But it is better to keep silent so that evil not be increased." N 475

26. Another brother asked the elder, "If I go to one of the fathers and ask him if I may stay with such and such, but he knows that this will not be to my advantage, what answer will he give me? If he says to me, 'Do not go,' is he not passing judgment on him in his *logismos*?" The elder said, "Not many can make such fine distinctions. If his impulse contained passion, he does himself harm, and his verdict has no validity. What then? If he says, 'I do not know' he gets himself out of the difficulty. If he is free of passion, he would not condemn anybody, but he N 476

would accuse himself saying, 'I really am a disorderly character; perhaps it would not be appropriate for me.' And if the questioner is intelligent, he will not go to live with the other, for [the elder] did not speak to do evil, but that evil not be increased."

10

Discretion [*Diakrisis*]

1. Abba Antony said, "There are some who wore their bodies away with *askēsis* but became far from God because they did not have discretion." Antony 8

2. Some brothers visited Abba Antony to report to him some visions they were seeing and to learn from him whether they were genuine or from demons. They had an ass, but it died along the way. When they came to the elder, he anticipated them, saying to them, "How came it about that the little ass died on the way?" "How do you know that, Abba?" they said to him, and he said to them, "The demons showed me," and they said to him, "And we came to ask you about this: we are seeing visions, and they are often genuine, but maybe we are being led astray." Using the example of the ass, the elder convinced them that [visions] are from demons. Antony 12

3. There was somebody in the desert hunting wild beasts, and he saw Abba Antony enjoying himself with the brothers. He was offended, so the elder wanted to convince him that the brothers needed to relax from time to time. He said to him, "Put an arrow to your bow and draw it." He did so. He said to him again, "Draw," and he drew. Again he said, "Draw." The hunter said to him, "If I draw too much, my bow will break." Said Abba Antony to him, "So it is too with the work of God. If we draw on the brothers beyond measure, they will soon collapse; so they must relax from time to time." The hunter was conscience stricken when he heard this Antony 13

and went his way greatly benefitted by the elder. The brothers went back to their place reinforced.

Antony 16 4. A brother said to Abba Antony, "Pray for me," and the elder said to him, "Neither I nor God will take pity on you unless you take pity on yourself and please him."

Antony 23 5. Abba Antony also said, "God does not permit the warfare of the enemy against this generation as against [the generation] of those of old, for he knows that they are feeble and would not endure it."

N 568 6. A brother asked Abba Arsenius, "Why are there some good folk who, at the time of death, fall into great affliction, stricken in their bodies?" The elder replied, "It is so that, salted as it were with salt here [see Mark 9:49], they may go there pure."

Arsenius 5 7. An elder said to the blessed Arsenius, "How is it that we have nothing from so much education and wisdom, while these Egyptian peasants have acquired such virtues?" Abba Arsenius said to him, "We have nothing from the world's education, but these Egyptian peasants have acquired the virtues from their own labors."

Arsenius 12 8. The blessed Arsenius used to say, "Let a foreign monk in a strange land not meddle in anything, and he will have repose."

Arsenius 12 9. Abba Macarius asked Abba Arsenius, "Is it good not to have any provisions in one's own cell? For I saw a brother who had a few vegetables and was harvesting them." Abba Arsenius said, "It is good, but according to the ability of the person; for if he doesn't have the strength for such a way of life, he will plant others again."[1]

Arsenius 39 10. Abba Daniel used to say, "When Abba Arsenius was about to die, he instructed us, 'Don't bother arranging

[1] Compare with 10.66.

an *agapē* for me, for if I did a voluntary act of charity [*agapē*] during my life, I shall find it there.'"

11. Abba Lot related, "I was once in the cell of Abba Agathon, and a brother came to him, saying, 'I want to live with brothers; tell me therefore how to live with them.' The elder said, 'Remain all your days the stranger you were the first day you came to them, so there be no familiar talking.' Abba Macarius said to him, 'What does familiar talking do?' The elder said, 'It is like a great heat wave: when it comes, everybody flees from the face of it, and it destroys the fruit of the trees.' Abba Macarius said, 'Is familiar talking as dangerous as that?' and Abba Agathon said, 'There is no other passion more dangerous than familiar talking; it is the originator of all the passions. The worker should not indulge in familiar talking even when he is alone in his cell.'" Agathon 1

12. They used to say of Abba Agathon that on hearing of his great discretion, some people went to him. Wanting to test him [to see] whether he would become angry, they said to him, "Are you Agathon? We hear that you are given to *porneia* and arrogant," but he said, "Yes, that is so." They also said to him, "Are you Agathon the tattler and slanderer?" and he said, "I am." Then again they said to him, "Are you Agathon the heretic?" and he replied, "I am not a heretic," and they begged him, saying, "Tell us why you accepted when we said so many things to you, but you did not tolerate this description?" He said to them, "I charge myself with the first [faults] because it is good for my soul; but to hear [oneself] called heretic—that is separation from God, and I do not wish to be separated from my God." On hearing this they were amazed at his discretion, and went their way enlightened. Agathon 5

13. The same Abba Agathon was asked, "Which is the greater: physical labor or interior vigilance?" and he Agathon 8

answered, "A person is like a tree; physical labor is the leaves, interior vigilance the fruit. Given that which is written, 'Every tree not bearing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire' [Matt 7:19], it is clear that our entire concern is with the fruits, meaning the vigilance of the mind; but there is also need of the protection and ornamentation the leaves provide: these are physical labor."

Agathon 10 14. Abba Agathon was wise in intellectual matters and self-sufficient in all things, in manual labor and in food and in clothing.

Agathon 14 15. When a council was held at Scete concerning some matter and a decision taken, the same Abba Agathon came later and said to them, "You have not made a good decision in this matter." They said to him, "And who are you to speak at all?" He said, "I am a son of man, for it is written, 'If you truly speak righteousness, then judge correctly, sons of men'" [Ps 57:2].

Agathon 19 16. Abba Agathon said, "If someone given to anger should [even] raise the dead, he is not acceptable to God."

N 1 17. Abba Athanasius was asked, "In what way is the Son equal to the Father?" He replied, "As there is one seeing in two eyes."

Achilles 1 18. Three elders, one of whom had a bad reputation, once visited Abba Achilles, and one of the elders said to him, "Abba, make me a net," but he said, "I will not." The other said to him, "Of your charity, make us a net so we can have a souvenir of you at the monastery," but he said, "I haven't time." The brother with the bad reputation said to him, "Make a net for me so I can have something from your hands, Abba," and in answer he said without hesitation, "I will make one for you." The [other] two elders said to him in private, "How is it that when we asked you, you refused to make [a net] for us,

and you say to this one, 'I will make [one] for you?'" He said, "I said to you, 'I will not make [one],' and you were not dismayed, [thinking] I hadn't the time. But if I do not make one for this [brother], he will say, 'The elder refused to make me [one] because he had heard of my sin,' and straightaway we would have been cutting the connection [with him]. But I raised up his soul to prevent somebody like him from drowning in sorrow."

Abraham 1

19. They used to say of a certain elder that he went fifty years without readily eating bread or drinking water. He used to say, "I have put to death *porneia,* avarice, and vainglory." There came to him Abba Abraham who had heard that he said this, and he said to him, "Did you say this?" and he said, "Yes." [Abba Abraham] said to him, "Imagine you come into your cell and you find a woman on your mat; can you not notice that it is a woman?" He said, "No, but I fight against the *logismos* in order not to touch her." Abba Abraham said to him, "So you see, the passion has not died; it lives but is in check. [Imagine] again you are walking along the way, and you see stones and shards with a piece of gold among them; is your mind capable of reckoning both of equal value?" "No," he said, "but I fight against the *logismos* in order not to take [the gold]." The elder said, "So you see, the passion lives, but it is in check." Abba Abraham also said to him, "[Imagine] again that you are hearing of two brothers; one loves you and the other hates you and speaks evil of you. If they come to you, do you esteem them equally?" He said, "No, but I fight against the *logismos* [and try] to do good to the one who hates me as to the one who loves me." Said Abba Abraham to him, "So, therefore, the passions are alive, only they are held in check by the holy ones."

Ammonas 4

20. One of the fathers related how there was a hard-working elder at The Cells who only wore a mat. He went and visited Abba Ammonas, who, when he saw

him wearing the mat, said to him, "That does you no good." And he asked him, "Three *logismoi* perplex me: whether to dwell in the desert, to go to a foreign land where nobody knows me, or to shut myself up in a cell, meeting nobody and eating every second day." Abba Ammonas said to him, "It will not do you any good to do any one of the three. Do you rather remain in your cell, eat a little each day, and always have in your heart what the publican said [see Luke 18:13: "God be merciful to me, a sinner"]—then you can be saved."

Daniel 1

21. They used to say of Daniel of Scete that the brothers fled when the barbarians came, and the elder said, "If God does not take care of me, why should I too go on living?" He passed through [the midst of] the barbarians, and they saw him not. So the elder said, "See, God took care of me, and I did not die. So I too ought to do the human thing and flee, as the fathers did."

Daniel 4

22. Abba Daniel said, "As the body prospers, so the soul declines; and as the body declines, so the soul prospers."

Daniel 6

23. Abba Daniel also told how when Abba Arsenius was at Scete, there was a monk there who was stealing the elders' goods. Abba Arsenius took him into his cell, wishing to win him over and to give the elders some respite. He said to him, "I will provide you with whatever you desire, only just do not steal." He gave him gold, coins, clothes, and everything he needed, but he went off and stole again. So the elders expelled him when they realized that he had not stopped, saying, "If a brother is found at fault through some weakness, he should be tolerated; but if he steals and does not stop when he is warned, expel him, for he is both damaging his soul and disturbing everybody in the place."

Euprepius 7

24. A brother visited some elder and said to him, "Abba, utter a saying for me [showing] how I might be saved,"

but he said to him, "If you wish to be saved, when you visit somebody, do not begin speaking until he questions you." Pricked in his conscience by the saying, he prostrated himself before him saying, "I have indeed read many books but never knew such teaching." He went his way improved.

25. An elder said, "Reading, watching, and prayer stabilize a wandering mind; hunger, labor, and isolation quench burning desire; psalm-singing, long-suffering, and mercy put anger to rest, if these things are activated at the appropriate times and in due proportion. For that which is disproportionate or not in due season is short lasting and harmful rather than beneficial." Evagrius, *Practicus* 15

26. Once when Abba Ephraim was passing by, there was a whore who approached him at somebody's instigation, and she fawned on him to move him to shameful intercourse, or at least to anger, for nobody had ever seen him being angry or contentious. But he said to her, "Follow me." Approaching a place where there were very many people, he said to her, "Here, in this place, do what you wanted to," but she, seeing the crowd, said to him, "How can we do it in the presence of such a crowd?" He said to her, "If you are ashamed before folk, how ought we not to be ashamed before God who reproved 'the hidden things of darkness'?" [see 1 Cor 4:5]. She went away ashamed. Ephraim 3

27. Some brothers once came to Abba Zēno and asked him, "What is that which is written in Job: 'Heaven is not pure in his sight'?" [Job 15:15]. In answer the elder said to them, "The brothers have left their sins aside and are inquiring about the heavens! This, however, is the explanation of the phrase: Since only God is pure, on that account it says that not even heaven is pure in his sight." Zēno 4

28. Abba Isaiah said, "Simplicity and not measuring oneself purge [one] of wicked *logismoi*."

29. He also said, "Heartache will not pass by whoever conducts himself craftily with his brother."

30. He also said, "Whoever says one thing and wickedly has another in his heart, the worship of such a person is worthless [see Jer 1:26]. Do not be connected with any such person, so that he does not pollute you with his contaminated venom."

31. He also said, "Acquisition, reputation, and repose do battle with a person until death; but one does not have to give in to them."

Theodore of Phermē 4

32. Abba Theodore of Phermē said, "If you are friends with somebody, and it happens that he falls into temptation to [commit] *porneia*, give him a hand if you can and draw him up. But if he should fall into heresy and be not persuaded by you to turn away [from it], quickly cut yourself off from him, lest by delaying you are dragged down into the abyss with him" [see Matt 15:14; Luke 6:9].

Theodore of Phermē 10

33. The same Abba Theodore once visited Abba John, a eunuch from birth, and as they were speaking, he said, "When I was at Scete, the spiritual tasks were our work; we regarded manual labor as a hobby. But nowadays the spiritual tasks have become a hobby and the [former] hobby the work!"[2]

Theodore of Phermē 8

34. One of the fathers came to him one day and said to him, "Look, such and such a brother has gone back to the world," and Abba Theodore said to him, "Do not be surprised at that; rather, be surprised if you hear that somebody has been able to escape from the jaws of the enemy."

Theodore of Phermē 16

35. The same Theodore said, "Many are they who opt for repose in this world before the Lord grants them repose."

[2] There is a wordplay here: *ergon* and *parergon*. See also 4.42.

John Colobos 2

36. They used to say of John Colobos that he once said to his elder brother, "I want to be free of concern just as the angels are free of concern, not laboring but unceasingly worshiping God" [see Matt 6:25-29; Luke 12:22-28]. He took off his garment and went out into the desert. After he had spent a week there, he came back to his brother. When he knocked at the gate, he heard [the other] within saying to him (before opening to him), "Who are you?" "I am John," he said, and in reply [the other] said, "John has become an angel and is no longer among humans." [John] called out, saying, "It is I; open up for me," but he did not open [the gate] for him; he left him to suffer until dawn. When he finally opened, he said to him, "See, you are human, so you will have to get back to work again in order to feed yourself." He prostrated himself saying, "Forgive me."

John Colobos 7

37. Some elders were once eating together at Scete, and Abba John Colobos was also with them. A priest got up to offer the water bottle, but nobody accepted any of it from him except John Colobos. They were astonished and said to him, "How dare you who are the most junior of all [presume] to be served by the priest?" But he said to them, "For my part, when I get up to offer the water bottle, I am delighted when everybody accepts—so that I get a reward. And that was why I accepted—in order to get a reward for him and so he would not be distressed that nobody accepted from him." They were astonished when he said this and much enlightened by his discretion.

Joseph of Panephō 3

38. Abba Poemen asked Abba Joseph, "What am I to do when the passions approach, resist them or let them come in?" The elder said to him, "Let them come in, and do battle with them." He went back to Scete and stayed there. One of the Thebans came to Scete and said to the brothers, "I asked Abba Joseph, 'If a passion approaches me, do I resist it, or do I allow it to

come in?' and he said to me, 'Certainly do not let the passions come in but cut them off straight away at the first onslaught.'" So, on hearing that Abba Joseph had spoken like that to the Theban, Abba Poemen rose up and went to Panephō and said to him, "I entrusted my *logismoi* to you, and look, you spoke otherwise to the Theban. Do you not know that I love you?" "Yes," said the elder, and he said, "Did you not say, 'Speak to me as though to yourself?' That was why I spoke the way I did. If passions come and you give and receive [blows] to and from them, they make you more experienced. So I spoke to you as though to myself. There are others for whom it is not good for the passions to approach; these need to cut them off immediately."

Joseph of Panephō 5

39. A brother once visited Abba Joseph at Lower Heracleon; there was a mulberry tree loaded with fruit at the monastery there, and, early in the day, the elder said to the brother, "Go and eat some mulberries." Now it was a Friday, so the brother did not go because of the fast. Later on he begged the elder, "For the Lord's sake, explain this *logismos* to me. Here you told me to go and eat, but I did not go because of the fast. Then I was ashamed of having disregarded your command, wondering what you were thinking of when you told me to go and eat." He said, "The fathers do not speak directly to the brothers at first, but perversely; and when they see that they are obeying and carrying out the [perverse commands], they no longer speak to them perversely, but in truth, knowing that they are obedient in all things."

Joseph of Panephō 4

40. A brother asked Abba Joseph, "What am I to do, for I can neither endure distress nor work to provide charity?" The elder said to him, "If you can do neither of these things, keep your conscience clear with respect to your neighbor and refrain from all evil; then you will be saved, for God seeks the sinless soul."

Isidore 4

41. Abba Isidore said, "If you are practicing *askēsis* according to the rule, do not be conceited when you fast; if you become arrogant on this account, what is the need of fasting? It is better for a person to eat meat than to become puffed up and boastful."

Isidore 5

42. He also said, "Those under instruction must love those who are their instructors like fathers and fear them like rulers, neither diminishing fear through love nor reducing love through fear."

Isidore 6

43. He also said, "If you really long for salvation, practice all the things that lead you to it."

Isaac the Theban 5

44. Isaac the Theban used to say to the brothers, "Do not bring children here, because four churches at Scete have become deserted because of children."

Longinus 1

45. Abba Longinus asked Abba Lucian about three *logismoi*, "I want to live in a strange land." The elder said to him, "Unless you hold your tongue wherever you go, you are no stranger. So hold your tongue here, and you are a stranger." He also said, "I want to fast every other day." Abba Lucian said to him, "The prophet Isaiah said, 'If you bend your neck like a bulrush, not even so will he call it an acceptable fast' [Isa 58:5]. Do you rather abstain from evil *logismoi*." A third time he spoke to him, "I want to get away from people," but he said to him, "Unless you first get it right with people, you will not be able to get it right living alone either."

Macarius of Alexandria 2

46. Abba Macarius visited Abba Pachomius of the Tabennesiōtes, and Abba Pachomius asked Abba Macarius, "When there are brothers who are out of order, is it good to correct them?" Abba Macarius said to him, "Correct those who are under your authority and judge them rightly, but judge nobody who is outside it, for it is written, 'You judge those that are within, don't you? But those that are outside, God judges'" [1 Cor 5:12-13].

Macarius 23b 47. A brother asked Abba Macarius, "How might I be saved?" The elder replied, "Be as though dead and pay no attention (like the dead) to the scorn or the admiration of people, and you will be saved."

Macarius 36 48. Abba Macarius said, "If we keep in remembrance the bad things said to us by people, we are suppressing the power of the remembrance of God; but if we keep the bad things in remembrance as though said to us by demons, we will be unharmed."

Matōēs 4 49. Abba Matōēs said, "Satan does not know by which passion the soul is worsted. He sows, but he knows not whether he will reap some people with *porneia*, others with slander, and likewise the rest of the passions; and to whatever passion he notices a soul to be inclined, he gets in there."

Natras 1 50. They related of Abba Natras, the disciple of Abba Silvanus, that when he was living in his cell on Mount Sinai, he acted with moderation toward himself in physical necessities; but when he became bishop at Pharan, he applied great austerity. His disciple said to him, "Abba, you did not discipline yourself like this when we were in the desert," and the elder said to him, "There it was desert, *hēsychia*, and poverty; and I wanted to govern my body so that I would not fall sick and go looking for that which I did not have. But now we are in the world and there are many temptations; therefore I cause the body to waste away in order not to lose the monk. If I fall sick here, there is somebody to care for me."

N 391 51. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "I am disturbed and wish to leave my place." The elder asked him, "On what account?" The brother replied, "Because I am hearing reports about a brother that are doing me no good." The elder said to him, "Aren't the things you heard true?" "Yes, they are, Father," the brother said, "and the brother who uttered them is trustworthy." "He is not

trustworthy," said the elder, "for if he were, he would not have said things like that to you. If when God heard the rumor about the people of Sodom he did not believe it unless he saw with the eyes [see Gen 18:21], neither ought we ever to believe the things that are said." "But I did see it with my eyes," the brother said. On hearing this, the elder looked down at the ground, took a sliver of straw, and said to him, "What is this?" "It is a straw," said the brother. Then, looking up to the roof of the cell, the elder said to him, "And what is that?" "It is a beam," the brother said. "Then put it into your heart that your sins are as that beam while your brother's are like this sliver of straw," the elder said [see Matt 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42]. On hearing this saying, Abba Tithoēs was amazed, saying, "In what way am I to deem you blessed, Abba Poemen, you precious stone [see 1 Cor 3:12]? Your sayings are full of joy and all glorious."

52. Abba Poemen said, "I prefer a person who has sinned, acknowledged his sin, and repents to one who has not sinned and is not humbled; for the first considers himself as one who has sinned and is humbled in his *logismos*, while the second considers himself to be righteous (which he is) and is puffed up." Sarmatas 1

53. Some priests of the district once came to the monastery where Abba Poemen was. Abba Anoub went in and said to him, "Invite the priests in for today." He stood there for a long time, but Abba Poemen gave him no answer, so he went out in sorrow. Those who were sitting near to [Abba Poemen] said to him, "Abba, why did you not give him an answer? He went out, sorrowing!" Abba Poemen said to them, "This has nothing to do with me, for I am dead, and a dead person does not speak. They are not to think that I am in here with them." Poemen 3

54. A brother once left the area where Abba Poemen was for another country and encountered a certain anchorite; he was a person of great charity, and many people were Poemen 8

resorting to him. The brother told him about Abba Poemen, and, when he heard of his virtue, he longed to see him.

Some time after the brother had returned to Egypt, the anchorite got up and came to Egypt from abroad to that brother who had visited him, [the brother] having told him where he was staying. [The brother] was amazed and very happy when he saw him. The anchorite said to him, "Of your charity, take me to Abba Poemen." He brought him to the elder and told him about him, saying, "He is a great one who has much charity and honor in his country. I told him about you, and he came desiring to see you." So he received him with joy; they embraced each other and sat down.

The stranger began speaking from the Scriptures about spiritual and heavenly matters, but Abba Poemen turned his face away and did not give him an answer. When he saw that [the elder] was not speaking with him, he went out sorrowing and said to the brother who had brought him, "I made this trip abroad in vain; I came to the elder, and he does not even want to speak with me." The brother went in to Abba Poemen and said to him, "Abba, it was on your account that he came, this great one who enjoys such esteem in his own place; why did you not speak with him?" The elder said to him, "He is from on high and speaks heavenly things, whereas I am from below and speak earthly things. If he had spoken to me about passions of the soul, I would have answered him; if of spiritual matters—I don't know those things."

The brother went out and said to him, "The elder does not readily speak from Scripture; but, if somebody speaks to him about passions of the soul, he will discuss [those]." So, pricked in his conscience, he went in to the elder and said to him, "What am I to do, Abba, for the passions of the soul are lording it over me?" Turning his attention to him, the elder rejoiced and said to him, "Now you are welcome; now I will open my mouth concerning these things and fill it with good things" [see Ps 80:11]. [The anchorite] was greatly enlightened;

he began saying, "This is indeed the true way," and he went back to his own country giving thanks to God for having been deemed worthy to meet such a holy one.

55. Abba Poemen said, "What is the point of building a house for somebody else and destroying one's own?" Poemen 127b

56. He also said, "What is the point in taking up a trade without learning it?" Poemen 128

57. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "I have committed a serious sin, and I want to repent for three years." Said Abba Poemen to him, "That is a long time." "For a year, then?" said the brother, and again the elder said, "It is still a long time." They who were present began saying, "How about forty days?" and again the elder said, "It is a long time." Then he said, "If a person repents with his whole heart and does not go on to commit the sin again, even in three days God will accept him." Poemen 12

58. Abba Amoun asked him about certain unclean *logismoi* that a person's heart generates and about vain desires. Abba Poemen said to him, "'Shall the axe boast without him that hews with it?' [Isa 10:15]. As for you, see that you neither lend your hand to them nor take pleasure in them, and they are impotent." Poemen 15

59. Abba Isaiah posed the same question, and Abba Poemen said, "Just as with a chest filled with clothes, they rot away in time if a person abandons it, so it is with the *logismoi*. If we do not physically perform them, they rot away in time and disappear." Poemen 20

60. Abba Joseph asked the same question, and Abba Poemen said to him, "Just as if somebody puts a snake and a scorpion into a jar and seals up the mouth, they die completely in the course of time, likewise evil *logismoi* also expire with patient endurance." Poemen 21

61. Abba Joseph also asked, "How ought one to fast?" and Abba Poemen said, "I would like the person who eats every day to stop a little short of eating his fill." Abba Poemen 31

Joseph said to him, "Did you not fast every second day when you were young?" "In fact for three days and a whole week," the elder said, "but the elders, being capable themselves, tested all these things and concluded that it was good to eat each day, but in small quantity. And they handed down this way to us because it is royal and light."

Poemen 86

62. A brother asked him, "If a person falls prey to some wrongdoing and turns his back on it, does God forgive him?" The elder said, "He who commanded people to do this will even more so do it himself, for he urged Peter, 'Forgive your brother as many as seventy times seven'" [see Matt 18:22].

see Poemen 93

63. Another brother, harassed by the demon of blasphemy, went off to Abba Poemen wishing to reveal the *logismos*; but he came back without saying anything to the elder. Then, seeing himself severely harassed by the same spirit, he went to the elder again; but again he was ashamed to speak out and returned with nothing accomplished, having said nothing to the elder. This he did very many times, going to speak out about the *logismos* to the elder and returning saying nothing, out of shame. Now the elder perceived that the brother was embattled by *logismoi* and ashamed to speak out.

When he came again as usual and had said nothing, Abba Poemen said to him, "What is the matter, brother, that you go away saying nothing?" "What have I to say, Father?" said the brother, and Abba Poemen said to him, "I have a feeling that you are embattled by *logismoi* and do not want to speak out about them to me; perhaps you think that I would speak out about them? I am telling you, brother, as this wall does not speak, neither do I mention another's *logismos* to anybody." So the brother confidently said to the elder, "I am in danger of perdition through the spirit of blasphemy, Father, for it is seeking almost to persuade me that God does not exist; something even the pagans neither do nor think of doing."

The elder said to him, "Do not be alarmed by this *logismos*; the battles with the flesh often happen to us on account of carelessness, but this *logismos* does not come upon us on account of carelessness: this is the stratagem of the serpent itself. When this *logismos* comes upon you, get up and pray; sign yourself [with the cross] and say within yourself as though speaking to the enemy, 'Anathema to you and to your onslaught! May your blasphemy be on your own head, Satan! For I believe that God exists, providing for all. This *logismos* is not from me but from you, the malevolent one,' and I believe that God will relieve you in this affliction."

When the brother came out from the elder's [cell], he went and acted according to his instruction. When the demon had seen that onslaught of his carried off, he retreated from [the brother] by the grace of God.

64. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "What am I to do about this weight that is oppressing me?" He said to him, "Small and large vessels are equipped with girdles so that when there is no favorable wind they attach the towrope and the girdles to their chests and haul the vessel a little until God sends a wind that is getting up. Then they hasten on and drive a stake in and tie the vessel so that it may not be tossed about. Finding fault with oneself is the stake."[3] Poemen 145

65. Abba Poemen said, "Do not live in a place where you see some who are jealous of you; otherwise you will make no progress." Poemen 18

66. A brother came to Abba Poemen and said to him, "I sow my field and give to charity from it." The elder said to him, "You do well." Off he went with zeal and increased his charitable giving. Abba Anoub heard tell of this, and he said to Abba Poemen, "Do you not fear God, speaking to the brother like that?" but the elder Poemen 22

[3] The text is somewhat confused here.

kept silent. Two days later, Abba Poemen sent for and fetched the brother. In the hearing of Abba Anoub, he said to him, "What did you say to me the other day, for my mind was elsewhere?" The brother said to him, "I said that I sow my field and give to charity from it," but Abba Poemen said to him, "For my part I thought you were speaking of your brother the worldling. If it is you who are doing these things, you are not doing well; this is not the work of a monk." He was sad when he heard this and said, "I have no other activity and only know this one; I am unable *not* to sow my field." When he had left, Abba Anoub prostrated himself, saying, "Forgive me." Said Abba Poemen to him, "I too knew from the beginning that it is not monk's work, but I spoke to his way of thinking and gave him zeal to progress in charity. Now he has gone off in sorrow and is going to do the same again."

Poemen 67

67. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "What is 'to be angry with his brother without a cause'?" [Matt 5:22]. The elder said, "All the arrogance with which your brother treats you, even to the point where he tears out your right eye, and you getting angry with him—that is, being angry with him without a cause. But if somebody wants to separate you from God, be angry with him."

Poemen 23

68. Abba Poemen said, "If a person sins and does not deny it, saying, 'I sinned,' do not condemn him, or you will cut off his eagerness. But if you say to him, 'Do not be disheartened, brother, and do not despair of yourself but be on your guard in future,' you rouse his soul to repentance."

Poemen 152

69. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "I want to live in a *coenobion*," The elder said to him, "If you want to enter a *coenobion*, unless you can be unconcerned in every circumstance and about every matter, you cannot perform the tasks of the *coenobion*; [for there] you have no authority other than over [your] water bottle."

70. Another brother asked the same Abba Poemen, "My *logismoi* propose to me things that are beyond me and cause me to despise one who is inferior to me." In answer the elder said to him, "The apostle says, 'In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver but also of wood and of clay. If a man therefore purges himself from all these, he shall be a useful vessel, of value to his own master, ready for every good work'" [see 2 Tim 2:20-21]. The brother replied, "How is that explained?" The elder said to him, "The house is to be explained as the world, the vessels as people: the golden vessels as the accomplished, the silver as those who come next, the wooden and earthenware [vessels] as those who are still quite modest in spiritual stature. If then a person purges himself of all these things (meaning not passing judgment on anybody), he too will be a useful vessel, useful to the master, made ready for every good work." Poemen 100

71. He also said, "Practical experience is better than explanations, for it renders a person more tried and tested." Poemen 24

72. He also said, "A person who teaches but does not do what he teaches is like a spring that waters and washes everybody but is unable to cleanse itself: all [kinds of] filth and uncleanness lurk within it." Poemen 25

73. Abba Seridos once went off to Abba Poemen with his disciple, Isaac, and said to him, "What am I to do with this one, for he readily hears what I say?"[4] Abba Poemen said to him, "If you want to be of benefit to him, show him virtue in action, since he remains inactive while paying attention to the word. If you show him something in action, that will remain with him."

74. Abba Poemen said, "[Living in] the *coenobion* requires three practices: humble-mindedness, obedience, Poemen 103

[4] Something like "but does it not" seems to be required here by what follows.

and motivation that has a spur concerning the activities of the *coenobion* so they be not despised."

Poemen 27 75. He also said, "There is one person who seems to keep silent, while in his heart he is passing judgment on others. Such a person is speaking all the time. Another person is speaking from dawn to dusk yet maintains silence: I mean, he says nothing that is not beneficial."

Poemen 29 76. He also said, "If there are three together, one effectively practicing *hēsychia*, one sick and offering thanksgiving, the other looking after [them] with a pure conscience, the three are of one undertaking."

Poemen 177 77. He also said, "Malice does not in any way eliminate malice; so if a person does you wrong, do good to him—in order to eliminate malice through goodness."

Poemen 91 78. He also said, "He is not a monk who complains of his lot; he is not a monk who strikes back; he is not a monk who is given to anger."

79. He also said, "The power of God does not dwell in a person who is enslaved to the passions."

80. He also said, "If we pursue repose, the grace of God flees from us; but if we flee from [repose], [grace] pursues us."

Poemen 28 81. A brother came to Abba Poemen and said to him, "I have many *logismoi* and am in danger from them." The elder took him out in to the open air and said to him, "Inflate your chest and hold the winds," but he said, "I cannot do that." The elder said to him, "If you cannot do that, neither can you prevent the *logismoi* from coming in. Your [task] is to withstand them."

Poemen 33 82. A brother asked the same Abba Poemen, "A legacy has been left to me; what do you bid me to do with it?" Abba Poemen said to him, "Go away and in three days I will tell you." Then when he came back again the elder

said to him, "What am I to say to you, brother? If I say to you, 'Give it to the church,' they will have banquets there; if I say, 'Give it to your relatives,' there is no reward for you in that; but if I say, 'Give it to the poor,' you will have no worries. So go and do what you like; for me, this is not my business."

83. Abba Poemen also said, "If a *logismos* comes upon you concerning the essential needs of the body and you attend to it once, then it comes back and you attend to it; the third time it comes, pay no attention to it—for it is impotent." Poemen 40

84. A brother asked Abba Poemen about physical passions. He said to him, "These are they who sing at the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, for if the flute players had not fluted for the people, they would not have bowed down to the statue. Thus the enemy sings to the soul in the physical [passions]." N 661; N 693

85. He also said that Abba Theonas used to say, "If somebody acquires a virtue, God does not endow the grace of it on him alone, for he knows that a person is not reliant on his own labor. But if [that grace] comes upon his colleague, then it stays with him." Poemen 151

86. A brother asked the same Abba Poemen, "If I see something, do you want me to speak of it?" The elder said, "It is written, 'He that answers a matter before he hears of it—it is folly and shame to him' [Prov 18:13]. Speak if you are asked; otherwise, keep silent." Poemen 45

87. The same [brother] also asked about *accidie* and negligence, and the elder said to him, "*Accidie* militates against every good undertaking and impels folk to negligence. If a person perceives its damaging effect yet perseveres in a good undertaking, he experiences repose." see Poemen 149

88. Abba Poemen also said, "There is a person carrying an axe who chops away the whole day long and does Poemen 52

not succeed in getting the tree down. There is another person, experienced in felling, who brings the tree down with a few cuts." He said that the axe is discretion.

Poemen 54

89. He also said, "A person's will is a brazen wall [see Jer 1:18] between him and God; if a person abandons it, he too says, 'In my God I will leap over the wall,' and, 'my God, spotless is his way' [Ps 18:30-31]. If then justice comes into conflict with the will, a person is struggling."

Poemen 52

90. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "I am losing my soul, staying near my *abba*." The elder saw that he was being hurt and wondered how he stayed on, being hurt. He said to him, "Stay, if you want to," and he went and stayed. But he came again, saying to the elder, "I am damaging my soul being near my *abba*," but Abba Poemen did not say to him, "Come away from him." He came a third time, saying, "I really am not staying with him any longer," and the elder said to him, "Look, now you will be saved; off you go and stay with him no longer," adding, "If a person realizes that damage is being done to his soul, he does not need to inquire of another. One inquires about secret *logismoi*, and it is up to the elders to scrutinize [them], but where flagrant sin is concerned, the need is not to inquire but to cut it out immediately."

Poemen 67

91. Abba Agathon's *abba*, Abraham, asked Abba Poemen, "Why are the demons battling me so?" and Abba Poemen said to him, "Are the demons battling you? The demons do not battle with us as long as we are doing their wills, for our wills have become demons; it is they that afflict us so that we fulfill them. Do you want to see with whom the demons do battle? With Moses and those like him."

Moses 12

92. Abba Poemen said that a brother once asked Abba Moses, "In what way does a person make himself dead

with respect to the neighbor?" The elder said, "Unless a person puts it in his heart that he has already been three years in the tomb, he cannot attain to this saying."

93. A brother asked Abba Poemen, "How should one remain in his cell?" The elder said, "The visible components of staying in one's cell are doing manual work, eating once a day, silence, and meditation; but to make progress secretly in one's cell is to tolerate laying the blame on oneself in every place where you go and not to be neglectful of the times for *synaxes* or for secret [prayers]. If a slack time occurs in manual work, go into the *synaxis* and discharge it with an untroubled mind. Finally, keep good company too and eschew bad company." Poemen 168

94. Two brothers once came to Abba Pambo, and one of them asked him, "Abba, after fasting for two days, I eat a pair of loaves; am I being saved or going astray?" The other [brother] said, "Abba, I gain two coins per day by the labor of my hands. I keep a little [change] for my food and give the rest to charity; am I being saved or going astray?" But the elder did not give them an answer, though they pleaded much with him. But after four days, just as they were going to leave, the clergy pleaded with them, saying, "Do not upset yourselves, brothers; God will reward you. Such is the custom of the elder; he is not in a hurry to speak without the assurance of God." So [the clergy] went to the elder and said to him, "In the name of the Lord, say something to the brothers." Then the monks went in too and said to him, "Abba, pray for us." He said to them, "You want to leave?" "Yes," they said to him, and, recalling their activities by writing on the ground, he began saying, "Pambo fasts two days and eats a pair of loaves; but is it by this that he becomes a monk? No. And Pambo works day by day, gains two coins, and gives them to charity; but is it by this that he becomes a monk? Not yet." The elder said to them, Pambo 2

"Works are good, but keeping your conscience [clear] with respect to your neighbor—that way you are saved." Reassured, the brothers went away with joy.

N 383 95. A brother asked Abba Pambo, "Why do the demons hinder me from doing good to my neighbor?" The elder said to him, "Do not speak like that, or you make God a liar. Say rather, 'I am totally unwilling to be merciful,' in anticipation of which God has said: 'I have given you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy'" [Luke 10:19].

N 694 96. Abba Palladius said, "The soul that is in training for God must either faithfully learn that which it does not know or teach plainly what it does know. If it wants to do neither, it is suffering from a derangement, for the beginning of apostasy is disdain for teaching and lack of appetite for [the] Word—[two] things for which the God-loving soul ever pines."

see N 384 97. One of the elders used to say, "I asked Abba Sisoēs to utter a saying for me, and in answer he said that a monk ought to be lower than the idols in his *logismos*. I went away to my cell and was devastated for a year, saying, 'What is "lower than the idols"?' I came again to the elder and said to him, 'What does it mean to be "lower than the idols"?' Then the elder said to me, 'It is written of the idols, "Mouths they have and will not speak; eyes they have and will not see; ears they have but will not hear" [Ps 134:16-17]. So ought the monk to be. And because idols are an abomination, so will he regard himself as an abomination.'"

Sisoēs 6 98. A brother said to Abba Sisoēs, "How is it that the passions do not recede from me?" The elder said, "Their equipment is inside you; give them their due, and they will go away."

Silvanus 99. A brother visited Abba Silvanus at Mount Sinai; he saw the brothers working and said to the elder, "'Labor not

for the meat that perishes' [John 6:27]. 'Mary has chosen the good part'" [Luke 10:42]. The elder said to Zachariah, his disciple, "Put this brother in a cell with nothing in it." When the ninth hour came round, [the brother] was watching by the door to see whether they would send [for him] and call him to eat. But as nobody said anything to him, he got up, came to the elder, and said to him, "Did the brothers not eat today, Abba?" "Yes," said the elder, and the brother said, "Then why did you not call me?" "You are a spiritual person," the elder said, "and you do not need this food. But we, being physical [creatures], want to eat; it is for that reason we also work. But you 'have chosen the good part,' reading all day long, and you do not want to eat physical food." When he heard this, he prostrated himself, saying, "Forgive me, Abba," and the elder said to him, "Mary certainly needs Martha, and it is thanks to Martha that Mary gets the praise."

100. One of the fathers said, "Somebody once fell into a grievous sin, was moved to repentance, and went to confess to some elder. He did not tell him the action but spoke to him like this: 'If a *logismos* such as this comes to someone, has he salvation?' Having no experience in discretion, that [elder] replied, 'He has lost his soul.' When the brother heard this, he said, 'Since I am lost, I am going to the world.' As he was going away, the idea came to him that he would go and report his *logismoi* to Abba Silvanus, for he was one of great discretion. N 217

"The brother came to him; he did not tell him the action but used the same device again as in the case of the other elder. The father opened his mouth and began saying to him (from the Scriptures) that there is no condemnation whatsoever for having *logismoi* [see Rom 8:1]. The brother was revived in his soul on hearing that; hope sprang up in him, and he confessed the action to him too. When the father heard the action, like a good physician he poulticed his soul [with texts] from the Sacred Scriptures, [indicating] that there is repentance

for those who consciously turn to God. And when my *abba* visited that elder, he told him these things, saying, 'And here, he who once despaired of himself and was about to go to the world is like a star in the midst of the brothers' [Gen 37:9]. I have told these things so we might see that there is danger in speaking of either our *logismoi* or our actions to undiscerning people."

Synklētikē 10

101. Holy Synklētikē said, "They who amass palpable wealth by toil and dangers long for yet more after they have acquired a large amount. They consider what is in hand as nothing, straining to get that which is not in hand. We, on the other hand, who have nothing of the things that are sought after have no wish to acquire [anything], for fear of God."

Synklētikē S 10

102. She also said, "There is a sorrow that is beneficial and a sorrow that is destructive. Useful sorrow is to groan for one's own sins and for the ignorance of [one's] neighbor; [it is] not to fall short of the intended goal in order to attain the ultimate goodness. These are the characteristics of a godly sorrow. There is, though, a certain affinity of the enemy with them; for he too will project a totally unreasonable sorrow, what many people call *accidie*. It is necessary to scare this spirit away, especially by prayer and psalm singing."

Synklētikē 13

103. She also said, "It is good not to get angry, but if it happens, [Paul] did not allow you even the space of a day for the passion, for he said, 'Let not the sun go down [upon your wrath]' [Eph 4:26]. Would you wait until all your time was fulfilled? Do you not know how to say, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'? [Matt 6:34]. Why hate the person who grieved you? It is the devil, not he, who grieved you. Hate the illness, not the person who is ill."

Synklētikē 12

104. She also said, "It is dangerous for somebody who has not been through the practical experience of life to

undertake teaching. Just as somebody who has a house that is dilapidated will hurt those in the dwelling if he receives guests, so too those [teachers] who did not first build securely brought those who went to [them] (and themselves also) to perdition. They motivated the ascetics to salvation with words but did them an injustice by the badness of their behavior."

105. She also said, "There is an intensified *askēsis* that is of the enemy, and his disciples practice it. How then are we to discriminate between the godly and royal *askēsis* and that which is tyrannical and demoniac? Is it not clear from due proportion? Let there be one rule of fasting throughout your time. Do not fast four or five days in a row then break it on the next day with an abundance of provisions because of your weakness; that makes the enemy rejoice. Disproportion is destructive everywhere. Do not throw your weapons away at once, be found naked, and become an easy prey in the battle. Our weapons are the body, our soul the soldier; take care of them both for the time of need. Fast while you are young and in good health, for old age will come together with sickness; lay up treasure while you can, so you may find it when you cannot" [see Matt 6:20]. Synklētikē 15

106. She also said, "As athletes make progress, so they face greater opponents." Synklētikē 14

107. Two elders, great anchorites, once came from the district of Pelusium to Amma Sarah, and as they were on the way, they were saying to each other, "Let us put this old woman down." So they said to her, "See that your *logismos* be not lifted up, Amma, and you say to yourself, 'Here are anchorites coming to me, who am a woman,'" but she said to them, "I am a woman by nature but not in *logismos*." Sarah 4

108. Amma Sarah also said, "If I pray to God that everybody would have confidence in me, I will be found at the Sarah 5

door of each one, apologizing. But I am more inclined to pray that my heart be pure with all."

109. Abba Hyperechios said, "The truly wise one is not he who teaches by word but he who educates by deed."

The Roman 1

110. There once came and resided at Scete (very near to the church) a monk from Rome who had been a grandee of the palace; he had a single servant to wait on him. When the priest noticed his weakness and learned moreover to what luxury he was accustomed, he sent him whatever God supplied and had accrued to the church. After spending twenty-five years at Scete, he gained the second sight and became famous. When one of the great Egyptians heard about him, he came to see him, expecting to find an intensified bodily discipline in him. He went in and embraced him; they offered a prayer and sat down. The Egyptian saw him wearing very soft clothing [see Luke 7:25]. There was a mat with a fleece on it beneath him and a small pillow; his feet were clean, shod with sandals. He was scandalized on seeing this—[scandalized] that, in a place like that, he was living in such luxury rather than in austerity. Since the elder had second sight, he became aware that [the Egyptian] was scandalized, and he said to the one who waited on him, "Make us a feast in honor of the *abba* today." There were a few vegetables, and he cooked them; when the time arrived, they got up and ate. For his weakness the elder had a little wine too, and they [both] drank. When evening fell, they offered the twelve psalms and went to bed; likewise in the night. When he got up at dawn, the Egyptian said, "Pray for me," and out he went, unenlightened. When he had gone a little way, wishing to enlighten him, the elder sent [for him] and called him back, receiving him joyfully when he returned. He inquired of him, "What country or city are you from?" The Egyptian said, "I am not a citizen at all, but a villager." "What was your work in the vil-

lage?" said the elder. "Herdsman," he said. "Where did you sleep?" said the elder. "In the field," he said. "Did you have bedding under you?" said the elder. "Would I have bedding in the field to put under me?" he said. "But how did you sleep?" said the elder. "On the ground," he said. "What were you eating in the field," the elder said, "or what wine used you to drink?" and he replied, "Is there food and drink in the field?" "How did you live, then?" the elder said, and he said, "I would eat a little bread with salted fish and drink water." "That is severe hardship," the elder replied and continued, "Was there a bath house in the village so you could wash?" "No," he said, "but we would wash ourselves in the river when we wanted to." When the elder had got all this [information] from him and had learned of his former way of life and affliction, he told him the nature of his own former life in the world: "I, the humble person you see, am from the great city of Rome where I became a grandee in the imperial palace." When he heard the beginning of the story, the Egyptian was conscience stricken and listened carefully to what was being said by him. "I abandoned Rome," he said, "and came to this desert. I at whom you are looking also possessed great houses and much wealth. I turned my back on that and came to this little cell. I at whom you are looking also had golden beds with valuable bedding, in exchange for which God has given me this mat and a fleece. My clothing too was very expensive, instead of which I now wear these cheap clothes. Much gold was expended for my nourishment; in its place God has given me these few vegetables and a little cup of wine. The servants dancing attendance on me were many, while here, in exchange, God has prompted this elder to wait on me. Instead of a bath, I pour a little water on my feet and [wear] sandals on account of my weakness. Again, instead of musicians with flutes and lute, I say the twelve psalms; likewise, during the night, instead of the sins I used to commit,

I calmly offer my little act of worship before taking repose. So I beg of you, father, not to be scandalized by my weakness." The Egyptian came to himself when he heard this and said, "Ah me! It was from much adversity in this world that I came to be comfortable; and what I lacked then I now possess. But you came from being very comfortable into affliction; you came from high honor and much wealth to lowliness and poverty." Greatly enlightened, he went his way. He became his friend and often visited him to be enlightened, for [the Roman] was a person with second sight, replete with the fragrance of the Holy Spirit.

James 4

111. An elder said, "There is no need of words only, for there are many words in people nowadays, but there is need for action. That is what is sought, not words, which bear no fruit."

N 216

112. A brother asked one of the fathers whether one is defiled by thinking unclean *logismoi*. An inquiry into this question was made, some saying yes, one is defiled, others that he is not, "otherwise we wretches could not be saved. The criterion is not to perform them physically." But the brother went to a more experienced elder and asked him about this. [The elder] said to him, "It is required of each one according to his stature." "For the Lord's sake, explain this saying to me," the brother begged the elder. "Imagine there is a highly desirable object lying here," the elder said to him, "and that two brothers come in, one of great stature, the other less so. If the *logismos* of the accomplished brother says, 'I would like to possess that object,' but, without hesitation, he promptly cuts it off, he is not defiled. And if the one not so advanced should covet the object and meditates on the *logismos* but does not take it, neither is he defiled."

N 247

113. An elder said, "If one inhabits a place but does not produce the fruit of the place, the place chases him off for not producing the fruit of the place."

114. A brother was working on a day when a martyr was being commemorated. Another brother saw him and said to him, "Is it possible to be working today?" The other said to him, "On this day the servant of God was tortured and beaten bearing witness [to his faith]; and ought I not to put a little effort into the work today?" N 86

115. An elder said, "If a man undertakes something following his own will but not God's and is unaware of it, it is absolutely necessary that he eventually come into the Way of God. But one who holds onto his own will contrary to God's and refuses to listen to others under the impression that he has knowledge, such a man will come to the Way of God with hardship." N 248

116. An elder was asked, "What is 'the straight and narrow way'?" [Matt 7:14]. He answered, "'The straight and narrow way' is this: to constrain one's own *logismoi* and to cut back one's own desires in deference to God, for this is the meaning of 'Behold, we have abandoned all and followed you'" [Matt 19:27]. N 249

117. An elder said, "In the same way that the order of monks is superior to that of the worldlings, so must a monk from afar be, in every way, a mirror for the monks of the locality." N 250

118. An elder said, "If a monk sets himself to do good but lacks the strength to do it in the place where he is, let him not think that if he were to go elsewhere, he would have the strength to accomplish it." N 446

119. One of the fathers said, "If a worker is staying in a place where there are no workers, he cannot make any progress; he ought to strive, therefore, to ensure that he does not fall back. On the other hand, an idle person living among workers will make progress if he is alert and at least not fall back if he does not [progress]." N 251

120–121. An elder said, "If a soul has words but no deeds, it is like a tree that has leaves but no fruit. Just N 252

as a tree bearing much fruit also has a plentiful array of leaves, so a word is appropriate for a soul given to good works."

N 218 123. An elder said, "We stand condemned not because *logismoi* come into us but for putting the *logismoi* to bad use. It is possible to be shipwrecked as a result of *logismoi*, and it is possible to be crowned as a result of *logismoi*."

see N 125 124. An elder said, "Neither take from nor give to a worldling; have no acquaintance with a woman, and do not converse much with a youth."

N 219 125. A brother asked an elder, "What am I to do, for many *logismoi* are making war on me, and I do not know how to war against them." The elder said to him, "Do not war against them all but against one, for all the *logismoi* of monks have one that is as their head. War against that head [*logismos*], and the *logismoi* will be brought low."

N 220; 10.126 126. Concerning evil-doing *logismoi*, an elder responded, "I beg you, brothers, that we refrain from desires in the same way as we desisted from deeds."

N 221 127. An elder said, "He who would live in the desert must be capable of teaching rather than be in need of teaching, if he is not to suffer hurt."

128. An elder said, "It is not appropriate for a monk to be asking, 'How is *x* and how is *y*?' for distracted from his prayer by this question, he falls into gossip and slander. So there is nothing better than to keep silent."

129. A brother asked an elder, "Tell me, Father, how am I to acquire Jesus?" He said, "Toil, humility, and unceasing prayer acquire Jesus. All the holy ones were saved by these three [activities] from beginning to end. Repose, one's own will, and [self-]justification are impediments to the monk's salvation; nearly all [who are lost] are lost through these."

130. The same [elder] said, "Until a person acquires Jesus, he toils. One is allowed to be subject to toil so that, heeding the affliction of the toil, he fortifies himself on all sides, afraid of losing [the fruits of] such toils. For this reason [it applies] to the children of Israel too, for God led them around for forty years so that, heeding the affliction of the journeying, they would not turn back."

131. Somebody asked an elder, "How is it that the demons are powerful against us?" "Through our [own] wills," he said, and he added, "The cedars of Lebanon said, 'How big and tall we are, yet a small [piece of] iron fells us.' For people came, got themselves wood, made themselves hafts for the axe, and felled them. The trees (he said) are souls; the axe is the demons; the haft is our wills. So we are felled through bad wills. So let us not give to the demons of our own (meaning our wills), and they will not bring us down."

132. An elder said, "A habit is changed with great toil, especially if it is of long-standing. A person is saved if he toils away to change it; but he is damaged if he persists in it."

133. A brother inquired of an elder, "Am I being saved if I fast?" "No," said the elder. The brother said, "Am I being saved if I flee from people?" "No," the elder told him. The brother said, "If I practice love of the brethren, am I being saved?" The elder said, "No. But to be saved is this: to endure blame of oneself and not to afflict one's brother in any situation, for God is merciful with a person like that."

134. An elder said, "Joseph of Arimathea asked if he could take the body of the Lord. He took it and placed it in a new sepulcher, which is a pure heart. The body of Christ is for 'a new sepulcher,' 'a new man,' 'the [true] Israel.'" N 24

135. An elder was asked, "How am I to find God? In fasting, in toiling, in vigils, in [acts of] mercy?" He N 222

replied, "Many have indiscriminately afflicted their flesh and have come away empty, with nothing accomplished. Our mouth stinks from fasting; we have learned the Scriptures by heart; we have perfected [our knowledge of the Psalms of] David, and yet we do not possess what God is looking for, that is, fear, love, and humility."

N 223 136. A brother asked an elder, "See here, Abba. I ask the elders to speak to me about the salvation of my soul, but I retain nothing whatsoever of their words. Why should I ask when it does me no good? I am utterly unclean." There were two empty vessels there; the elder said to him, "Go and bring one of those vessels; put some oil in it and wash it out, then put it back in its place." This he did, once and once again. Then the elder said to him, "Now bring the two together and see which is the cleaner." "It is the one I put some oil in," said the brother. "And so it is with the soul," the elder replied, "for even if it retains nothing of what it learns, it is more purified than the one that asks no questions."

N 404 137. One of the fathers recounted [this]: "There was a very devout brother who had a penniless mother. There being a severe famine, he took some loaves and set out to bring them to his mother, and here there came a voice saying to him, 'Is it you or I who looks after your mother?' In acknowledgement of the point the voice had made, the brother threw himself face down on the ground, begging and saying, 'It is you, Lord, who cares for us,' then he stood up and went back to his own cell. Then, on the third day, his mother came to his cell, saying, 'Such and such a monk gave me a little grain, saying, "Take this and make us some little loaves so we can eat."' The brother glorified God when he heard this. He was suffused with hope, and, by the grace of God, he made progress in every virtue."

N 224 138. A brother was living in *hēsychia*, and demons masquerading as angels wanted to lead him astray. They

got him up, allegedly for the *synaxis*, then they began asking [him questions] and showing him certain things. He visited an elder and said to him, "Abba, angels come with a light and waken me for the *synaxis*." "Do not listen to them, my son," the elder told him, "for they are demons. When they come to wake you, say to them, 'I will get up when I want to; I am not listening to you.'" The brother took the elder's advice and went back to his cell. The next night the demons came to him again as usual and got him up, but he retorted as he had been advised: "I will get up when I want to; I am not listening to you." "That wicked old man has led you astray, the liar," they said. "A brother came to him wanting to borrow some money, and although he had some, he lied to him, saying, 'I haven't got any,' and did not give him [any]. Learn from this that he is a liar."

First thing in the morning, the brother went to the elder and reported this to him. "I admit that I had some money," the elder said. "It is also true that a brother came in search of [some money], but I gave him none, for I reckoned that if I gave him any, we would come to the dead loss of [our] souls. It seemed preferable to transgress one commandment rather than ten and for us to go suffer affliction. For your part, pay no attention to the demons who wish to lead you astray." He returned to his cell much strengthened by the elder.

139. An elder said, "It is impossible for one who thinks correctly and lives devoutly to be abandoned and to fall into shameful transgressions or the deception of demons." *HL* 47

140. He also said, "As long as the body has desires, the soul is ignorant of God."

141. He also said, "Knowledge of God is sufficient for the health of the soul."

142. He also said, "Everybody prays for the good things; they acquire them who genuinely participate in the Divine Word and serve him through the virtues."

143. Some brothers asked one of the fathers, "How is it that the soul does not run toward the promises of God that he promised through the Scriptures but diverges toward the impure?" The elder said, "In my opinion it has not tasted [the good things] on high and desires the impure on that account."

144. An elder said, "If you are staying in a place and you see some people living comfortably, do not associate with them. But if there be another there who is poor, associate with him as long as he is without bread, and you will have repose."

N 674 145. One of the elders used to say concerning Moses, "When he slew the Egyptian, 'he looked this way and that and saw no man,' that is, [he looked] into his *logismoi*. He perceived that he was doing nothing wrong but was acting on behalf of God, and 'he slew the Egyptian'" [Exod 2:12].

N 675 146. He also used to say concerning the saying written in the Psalms, "I will establish his hand in the sea and his right hand in the rivers" [Ps 88:26] that this refers to the Savior. "His left hand in the sea"—that means the world; "and his right hand in the rivers"—those are the apostles who water the world by faith.

N 385 147. Three brothers once visited an elder at Scete, and one of them inquired of him, "Abba, I have learned the Old and New Testaments by heart." In reply the elder said to him, "You have filled the air with words." The second inquired of him saying, "I too have written out the Old and New Testaments for myself." The elder replied to him, saying, "You have filled the shelves with paper." The third one said, "In my case, mold has come up in my cooking pot," but replying to him too, the elder said, "Then you have chased hospitality away from yourself."

N 226 148. Some of the fathers said of one great elder that if anybody came asking for a saying, he would solemnly

answer him, "Behold, I am taking upon me the form of God and am seated on the throne of judgment; so what do you wish me to do for you? If you say, 'To have mercy on you,' God says to you, 'If you wish me to have mercy on you, do you then have mercy on your brother, and I will be merciful to you. If you wish me to forgive you, do you then forgive your brother.' Surely you don't think that God is responsible, do you? Certainly not! It is within us to be saved, if we are willing."

149. They used to say of one of the elders at The Cells that he put great effort into his toil. One of the other elders happened to visit him while he was offering his *synaxis*, and he could hear him from outside doing battle with his *logismoi*, saying, "Since when has all that been dissipated for the sake of a single saying?" The elder who was visiting him, thinking that he was quarreling with somebody else, knocked at the door, intending to go in and pacify them. But when he entered, he saw that there was nobody else in there. Since he was familiar with the elder, he said to him, "Abba, with whom were you quarreling?" "With my *logismos*," he replied, "for I know fourteen books [of the Bible] by heart, then I heard one miserable saying [*logos*, word] outside.[5] When I came to offer my *synaxis*, everything was unavailable, and only this one saying [*logos*, word] came into my mind when it was time for the *synaxis*; that is why I was quarreling with the *logismos*." N 227

150. Coming out of a *coenobion*, some brothers went visiting in the desert, and they came across an anchorite. He received them with joy, and, perceiving that they were worn out, he set a table before them right away with whatever there was in his cell and refreshed them, as is the custom among hermits. When evening fell they N 229

[5] Whether this means "outside his cell" or "not in the Bible" is not clear.

recited the twelve psalms and the same during the night. While the elder was keeping watch alone, he heard them saying to each other, "The anchorites in the desert have a more restful life than we in the *coenobia* do." In the morning, as they were about to go [visit] his neighbor, the elder said to them, "Greet him on my behalf, and tell him *not to water the vegetables*."

When the neighbor heard this, he acted according to the instruction: he kept them fasting and hard at work until evening. When evening fell he offered a long *synaxis*, then he said to them, "Let us break our fast for your sakes, for you are worn out." He also said, "It is not our custom to eat every day, but we will taste a little something for your sakes." He set bread and salt before them with nothing to drink. "But we must make a feast in your honor," he said, pouring a little vinegar on the salt. Then they got up and offered a *synaxis* until dawn. "I cannot complete the entire order of service since you are here, [but I will abbreviate it] so you may rest a little, since you are from afar." They would have got away when dawn broke, but he implored them, saying, "Stay with us for some time, at least for the three days stipulated by custom in the desert," but they slipped away secretly, aware that he would not willingly let them go.

N 676 151. One of the fathers said, "It says that the clean beast chews its food and has a cloven hoof [Lev 11:3-4]. So it is for the man who has a sound belief and accepts the two Testaments, things that are found in the church but are abandoned in various ways among the heresies. A person ought to ruminate on the good food but not on the bad. The beneficial food is good *logismoi*, a tradition of holy teachers, righteous deeds. The bad food is bad *logismoi* having to do with various sins and folks' iniquities."

N 230 152. A brother inquired of one of the fathers, "If I happen to be so weighed down by sleep and the time for

the *synaxis* goes by [unobserved], from shame my soul no longer wishes to offer the *synaxis*." Said the elder to him, "If you happen to sleep in until dawn, get up, close the window and doors, and offer your *synaxis*, for it is written, 'Yours is the day and yours is the night' [Ps 73:16], for God is glorified at all times."

153. A brother inquired of an elder, "Father, is it good for me to acquire distinction for myself, or [is it a] disgrace?" The elder said to him, "For my own part, I want to acquire spiritual distinction pleasing to God for myself rather than disgrace." The brother said to him, "How is that?" Said the elder, "If I do a good deed and reap distinction, I can denounce my *logismos* on the grounds that I am not worthy of that distinction. Disgrace results from evil deeds, and how can I console my heart when folk have taken offense at me? So it is better to do good and receive distinction than to commit evil and be disgraced." "You have spoken well, Father," the brother said. Theodore of Eleutheropolis

154. An elder said, "There is somebody who eats a great deal and is still hungry, and there is somebody who eats a little and is satisfied. He who eats much and is still hungry has a greater reward than the one who eats little and is satisfied." N 231

155. An elder said, "If there are bitter words between you and somebody and he denies it, saying, 'I said no such thing,' do not argue with him, saying, 'Yes you did,' for he will come back saying, 'I did not say [it].'"[6] N 232

156. A brother inquired of one of the fathers, "My sister is poor; if I give her charity, is it not like giving to one of the poor?" "No," said the elder. "Why, Abba?" said the brother. "Because [your own] blood draws you a little," he replied. N 233

[6] "So what?" adds N 232.

157. An elder said, "Falsehood, that is the Old Man; truth, the New Man."

158. He also said, "Truth is the root of good works; falsehood is death."

N 386 159. An elder said, "The monk should neither hear nor speak evil of anybody, nor should he easily take offense."

N 234 160. He also said, "Do not go along with or give your assent to every statement. Be slow to believe and quick to speak the truth."

N 235 161. An elder said, "Even if the saints toiled here below, they had already received a degree of repose." He said this because they were freed from the anxieties of the world.

N 236 162. He also said, "If a monk knows of a place that has [the promise of] progress but where the necessities of life demand toil, and he does not go there on that account, such [a monk] does not believe that there is a God."

N 237 163. A brother who was a novice asked an elder, "Which is better: to keep silent or to speak?" "If the words are idle chatter, leave off and be silent," he said to him. "If they are good, then give room for the good and speak. But even if they are good, do not [speak] at length but cut them off quickly, and you will have repose."

N 677 164. An elder said, "If a saying arises in the heart of a brother residing in his cell, and the brother embraces the saying but neither attains to it nor is drawn by God, the demons are at hand and show him the saying [in the sense] he wishes."

N 238; Megethios 4 165. One of the elders used to say, "When at first we used to meet together with each other and used to speak

of [spiritual] benefit, we became so many choirs[7] and ascended into heaven. Now when we are assembled, it is for slander, and we are dragging ourselves down into the abyss."

166. Another of the fathers said, "If our inner man is vigilant, it can also protect the outer man. If it is not, then let us at least keep a guard on the tongue." N 239

167. The same father also said, "Spiritual work is necessary because that is what we came for. It is very hard to teach orally when one has not performed the task physically." N 240

168. Another of the fathers said, "A person must always have something to work at within himself. If he is occupying himself with the work of God, the enemy comes by from time to time, but he finds nowhere to stay. If, on the other hand, somebody is found to be a prisoner of the enemy, the Spirit of God frequently visits him; but if we accord him no place, he goes away." N 241

169. A brother asked an elder, "Utter a saying for me so I can be saved." He said, "Let us make a diligent effort to work a little at a time; [then] God comes along with us, and we are saved." N 387

170. Some monks once came down to Scete from Egypt to visit the elders. When they saw the eagerness with which [the fathers], famished by their austerities, devoured their food, they were offended. The priest wished to correct them when he learned of this, so, preaching to the congregation in church, he said, "Fast, brothers, and intensify the austerity of your discipline." The visiting Egyptians wanted to leave, but he detained them. After the first week of fasting, they became dizzy, then he made them fast every second day, while the Scetiotes fasted the whole week. When Saturday came round, the N 242

[7] Of angels?

Egyptians sat down to eat with the elders. The Egyptians made quite a tumult in their eating, so one of the elders held their hands back, saying, "You should eat with discipline, like monks." One of them freed his hand, saying, "Let me go, for I am dying; I have eaten nothing cooked for a whole week." The elder said to him, "If you who have eaten every second day are wasting away like this, how come you were offended at the brothers who follow that austerity all the time?" They apologized to them and, edified by their austerity, went their way rejoicing.

N 394 171. A brother asked an elder, "What am I to do, for my *logismoi* want me to wander around on the pretext of visiting elders?" The elder answered, "If you see that it is on account of constraint that your *logismoi* want to bring you out of the cell, give yourself some small treat [*paraklēsis*] in your cell, and then you will not want to go out anymore. But if it is for spiritual benefit, try [the validity of] your *logismos* and then go out. I heard of an elder who, when his *logismoi* were telling him to visit somebody, would take his sheepskin, go out, circle his own cell, come back in again, and then serve himself the entire treat [reserved for] the guest; and, so doing, he experienced repose."

N 243 172. A brother who withdrew from the world and took the habit immediately went into seclusion, saying, "I am an anchorite." When the elders heard, they came, threw him out, and obliged him to do the round of the brothers' cells, prostrating himself and saying, "Forgive me, for I am not an anchorite but a novice."

N 244 173. The elders said, "If you see a youngster rising up to heaven of his own volition, seize his foot and pull him back from there, for it is not good for him."

N 245 174. A brother said to a great elder, "Abba, I was wanting to find an elder to my liking and to die with him."

Said the elder to him, "You may well search, my lord," but he took the *logismos* to mean what it said and did not reflect on the elder's *logismos*. When the elder saw that he was well assured, he said to him, "If you find an elder to your liking, do you want to live with him?" "I do indeed," he said; then the elder said to him, "So it is not so that you may follow the will of the elder but that he should follow your will that you intend to come to attain repose?" Then the brother understood; making an act of obeisance, he said, "Forgive me; though I thought I spoke wisely, I was being very conceited, understanding nothing."

175. Two persons who were blood brothers withdrew from the world; the younger was the first to take the habit. When one of the fathers came to visit them, they set out the bowl, and the younger brother came to wash the [feet of the] elder. But, seizing his hand, the elder set him aside, saying, "Go away, you," and he summoned the older one. "But the younger brother was the first to take the habit," protested those who were present, to which the elder replied, "I am taking seniority away from the younger one and conferring it on the one who is greater in age." N 246

176. An elder was asked by a soldier whether God accepted repentance. After he had questioned him in many words, the elder said to him, "Tell me, dear one, if your mantle is torn, do you throw it out?" "No," he said. "I sew it up and use it some more." The elder said to him, "So if you spare your own clothing, will not God be even more likely to spare his own creation?" He became very hopeful and joyfully went back home. Mios 3

177. A brother asked an elder, "What is the task of the soul, and what is that of the hands?" The elder said to him, "All the things that come into being through the commandment of God are tasks of the soul; but to work and to gain for oneself, that is a task of the hands." The Theodore of Phermē 11

brother said to him, "Explain this matter to me." The elder said to him, "Look, you hear that I am ill, and you say to yourself, 'I have to abandon my manual labor now and go; I will finish my task first and then go.' Then another pretext occurs to you, and you do not go. Or again a brother says to you, 'Give me a hand, brother.' Do you say, 'I have to abandon my manual labor and go work with him'? If you do not go, you have annulled the commandment of God—the task of the soul—through the task of the hands. But should someone seek you out to go in conformity with the commandment, that is the task of God."

N 70

178. The director of a *coenobion* asked the blessed Cyril, archbishop of Alexandria, "Who is more important in his way of life: we who have a host of brothers under ourselves and are guiding each one in various ways to being saved, or those who are saving themselves alone in the desert?" The archbishop replied, "There is no distinction between Elijah and Moses; both were well pleasing to God."

Matōēs 12

179. A brother asked an elder, "Tell me [to do] something." The elder said to him, "Cut off from yourself all contentiousness in every matter, and you will be saved."

N 634

180. An elder said, "Strife delivers a man to anger, anger to blindness, and blindness makes him work all manner of evil."

see Macarius 39, end

181. One of the fathers said, "A harsh word makes the good bad, but a good [word] benefits everybody."

N 665

182. One of the fathers used to say, "Our fathers entered into life by harshness, but let us enter by gentleness if we can."

N 26

183. A brother who had lived in voluntary exile questioned an elder, "I want to go home," and the elder said to him, "Be aware of this, brother, that when you were

coming into these parts, you had God guiding you. But if you want to go back, you will have him no longer."

184. An elder said, "There is a person who keeps silence not out of godliness but in the desire to acquire distinction for himself. If one keeps silence in godliness, that is truly a virtue, and he receives the grace [to do it] from God and the Holy Spirit."

185. One of the fathers said, "Unless a tree is blown this way and that by the wind, it neither grows up nor puts down a root. Likewise, a monk—unless he is tempted and prevails, he does not become firmly established." N 396

186. A brother asked an elder, "Why is it that when I offer my little *synaxis* I do it negligently?" In reply the elder said to him, "One's love for God is shown in this: when somebody performs the work of God with great enthusiasm, grief for sin, and undistracted *logismos*." N 395

187. One of the fathers said, "There is no nation [*ethnos*] under heaven like that of the Christians and no order like the order of monks too. But there is this single factor that does them damage: the devil leads them into bearing grudges against their brothers, saying, 'He told me . . . ,' and, 'I told him . . . ,' or, 'He has impurities about him and doesn't see them but broods on his neighbor's [impurities].' By this they are damaged." N 397

188. An elder said, "The monk must not only hear the commandments but perform them too."

189. While visiting another elder, one of the elders began to say, "There was a worldling who happened to receive charity, and when we sat down to eat, the elder said, 'Ask the worldling if he wants to come [in] and eat [with us],' but he didn't want to. The elder said, 'Give him more to eat than us.' There happened to be a little wine there for the offertory. The elder brought it out for us, and we drank one cup, but he gave two [cups] to the

worldling. One of the fathers said with a smile, 'I too am going [to eat] outside, Abba; give me two cups as well.' Said the elder, 'If he had eaten with us, he would have drunk the same as us and been satisfied. Now his *logismos* is saying, "The monks are in greater repose than I." It is better that our conscience condemn us.'"

N 59 190. I heard about an elder who lived in the temple at Klysma who did not engage in the seasonal manual labor and would not do it even if somebody ordered him to. At net-making season he would go off to make hay; when they needed thread [spun], he would [weave] linen—so that his mind would not be troubled by manual labor.[8]

N 228 191. An elder said, "The prophets composed the books, then came our fathers. They worked at them and learned them by heart. Then there came this generation; they wrote them out, then set them aside in casements, unused."

N 55 192. The elders used to say that the cowl is the symbol of innocence, the scapular of the cross, the girdle of courage. Let us then live a life that is consonant with our habit.

193. An elder used to say that one of the fathers said, "A very dry and unvaried diet coupled with charity rapidly leads the monk to the haven of *apatheia*."

194. He also said, "The death of [his] father was notified to one of the monks, but he said to the messenger, 'Stop blaspheming, for my father is immortal.'"

[8] The text of *APsys* is corrupt; see Guy, 135n1, ad loc; we give the text of N 59.

11

One Should Ever Be on Watch

1. Abba Antony said, "I know some monks who fell after many labors and came to the point of losing their reason. This was because they had hoped that their own work was well-pleasing to God and had disregarded the commandment that says, 'Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will speak to you'" [Deut 32:7]. Antony 37

2. He also said, "If possible, the monk ought to reveal to the elders how many steps he takes or how many drops of water he drinks in his cell [to see] whether he transgresses in those matters. For one brother found a place in the desert that was withdrawn and tranquil. He begged his father, saying, 'Let me live in that place, for I have good hope in God and in your prayers that I am going to toil mightily,' but his *abba* did not allow him to. He said, 'I know very well that you will toil mightily, but because you will not have an elder, you will trust in your work that it is pleasing to God, and through trusting that you are completely carrying out the function of a monk, you will loose your work and your reason.'" Antony 38; N 370

3. Abba Antony said, "He who beats a piece of iron considers in his *logismos* what he is going to make: a scythe, a sword, or an axe. So ought we to consider what kind of virtue we are seeking to acquire, so that we do not labor in vain." Anthony 35

4. A brother asked Abba Arsenios if he could hear a saying from him. The elder said to him, "Insofar as you are able, make a great effort for your internal working to be godly and do you overcome external passions." Arsenios 9

Arsenios 10 5. He also said, "If we seek God, he will appear to us, and if we retain him, he will remain with us."

Arsenios 35 6. Abba Daniel used to say, "Abba Arsenios called me one day and said to me, 'Look after your father so he might go to the Lord and personally intercede with him on your behalf; then it will be well with you.'"

Anoub 2 7. Abba Anoub said, "Since the name of the Lord was invoked over me, nothing false has come out of my mouth."

Agathon 2 8. Abba Agathon said, "The monk must not allow his conscience to be accusing him of anything whatsoever."

Agathon 29b 9–10. When the same Abba Agathon was at the point of death, he remained with his eyes open for three days. So the brothers shook him, saying, "Where are you, Abba Agathon?" He told them, "I am standing before the judgment seat of God." They said to him, "Are you afraid?" He said to them, "I did my best to keep the commandments of God, but I am a man; how then can I know whether my work was pleasing to God?" The brothers said to him, "Do you not have confidence in your work that it is godly?" The elder said, "I cannot be sure until I meet with God, for the judgment of God is one thing, that of folk another." As they went on wanting to ask him for yet another saying, he said to them, "Of your charity, do not speak to me, for I am busy," and straightaway he died joyfully. They saw him departing in the way one embraces his friends and loved ones. He was greatly vigilant in all things, and he used to say, "Without vigilance a person makes no progress, not even in a single virtue."

Ammōes 1 11. They used to say about Abba Ammōes that he would not allow his disciple to walk close to him but at a distance [from him] when he was on his way to church. And when he came to ask him about *logismoi*, [the elder] would chase him away when he had only just

begun speaking to him, saying, "It is in case some alien discourse occurs while we are speaking of benefit [to the soul] that I do not let you remain very close to me for long."

12. At first Abba Ammōes used to say to Abba Aseōs, "How do you see me at present?" and he to him, "As an angel, Father," then again, later on, he would say to him, "Now how do you see me?" but he would say, "As Satan; and so, if you utter a saying for me, I regard it as a sword." Ammōes 2

13. Abba Alōnas said, "Unless a person says in his heart, 'I alone and God are in the world,' he will not have repose." Alōnas 1

14. He also said, "If a man desires it until evening, he achieves divine stature." Alōnas 3

15. When Abba Bessarion was dying, he would say, "A monk ought to be all eyes, like the cherubim and seraphim." Bessarion 11

16. Once when Abba Daniel and Abba Ammōes were travelling, Abba Ammōes said, "When are we also going to stay in a cell, Father?" Abba Daniel said to him, "Who is taking God away from us now? God is in the cell, and the same God [is] outside too." Daniel 5

17. He also said, "It is a great thing to pray without distraction but yet greater to sing without distraction." Evagrius 3

18. The same [father] said, "Always be mindful of your departure, and do not forget the eternal judgment; then there will be no disturbance in your soul." Evagrius 4

19. He[1] also said, "A person who has an accusation arising in his heart is far away from the mercy of God."

[1] N.b., nos.19–34 are not Evagrius. Though not attributed, they are from Isaiah of Scete, *Ascetic Discourses*.

20. He also said, "These are the things that chase the remembrance of God from the soul: anger, contempt, the desire to teach, and the vain language of this world, while long-suffering, gentleness, and every godly undertaking bring love."

21. He also said, "Our fathers of old used to say that retirement [from the world] is exile of the body."

22. He also said, "To find thanksgiving in time of temptation, turn back the advancing *logismoi*; and not to believe that your toil is pleasing to God prepares [the way] for the assistance of God to protect you."

23. He also said, "Do not be malicious toward anybody, or you will invalidate your toil."

24. He also said, "The *leitourgia*[2] of a person who has the malice of retribution in his heart is in vain."

25. He would also say, "The trouble is that we have *apatheia* in the mouth and malice in the heart."

26. He also said, "As long as you are in the body, do not be boasting in your heart that you have done something right. Just as a person can have no confidence in the crops of his field before he has harvested them because he does not know what is going to happen, so ought a monk to not reckon in his heart that he has accomplished any good thing whatsoever as long as he has breath in his life."

27. Abba Peter, the disciple of Abba Isaiah, said, "My father used to say that he who tolerates himself being censured and lays aside his own will [in deference] to his neighbor for the sake of God in order not to allow the enemy to come between [them]—this reveals that person to be a toiler. If his mind is alert, he is at the

[2] This word can mean "worship," and it can also mean "service" to God or one's neighbor.

feet of the Lord Jesus in knowledge. For if he is vigilant and attentive, he is making an effort to retrench his own will in order not to be separated from the love of the Lord. For he who retains his own will will not be at peace even with the faithful, because wrath, contempt, and irritation with a brother are the concomitants of the heart that thinks it has knowledge."

28. He also said, "Contempt and reproaching somebody in the mind do not permit [one] to see the divine light."

29. He also said, "Let us ask God to grant us to weep for our own sins so that we may do our best to flee from humankind, have no loose talk with worldlings, or speak vain words with them, to prevent the mind from being darkened to the knowledge of God. For it is impossible for one who hears and speaks worldly discourse to have freedom of access before God in his heart. He who says, 'It does me no harm to hear and speak worldly matters,' is like a blind man who, if they bring a lamp to him, does not see its light. And of the sun that lights up the entire world, this is clear: that a small cloud running under it shields its brightness and heat. They who have knowledge know these things."

30. He also said, "Make a great effort to flee from these three passions that capsize the soul. These are love of money, esteem, and repose; for if these prevail over the soul, they do not allow it to progress."

31. Abba Peter used to say, "I once asked my *abba*, 'What does it mean to be a slave of the passions?' and he told me, '[It means] that insofar as a person is enslaved to any passion whatsoever, he has not been counted a slave of God but is a slave of that to which he is in subjection. Insofar as he is himself in detention, he is incapable of teaching one who is dominated by the same passion. It would be shame for him to teach before he has himself been set free from that [passion] or to pray

to God for the other. For how shall one pray for somebody else when he is in the grip of this [passion]? He is neither a slave of God, nor a friend, nor a son that he might intercede for another. Rather, he ought constantly to plead that he himself be redeemed from those [passions] to which he is a slave, and then he will consider his own face to be filled with shame before God. For as long as he is subject to the passions, he ought to weep for not having been found worthy of free access to God, which is the genuine purity that God requires of a person.'"

32. He also said, "If one seeks the Lord in the toiling of the heart, he will hear him; and whatsoever he asks in knowledge, with caring, and with toiling of the heart, unattached to anything of a worldly nature but looking after his soul (that he might present it uncondemned at his judgment seat), [the Lord] will grant him."

33. He also said, "Do not look down on the Psalms, for they expel the unclean spirits from the soul and install the Holy Spirit. Remember David when he sang to the harp, how he pacified Saul from the unclean spirit [see 1 Sam 16:23]. And Elisha too, who (when the people suffered severe thirst while they were fighting with the sons of Moab) said, 'Bring me somebody who knows how to sing [*psallein*] to the harp.' While he was singing, Elisha prayed; there came water and the people drank" [see 2 Kgs 15:13].

34. Abba Isaiah used to say, "Keep a guard on your mouth so that your neighbor is honorable in your sight. Educate your tongue intelligently in the Word of God, and falsehood will flee away from you."

Theodore of the Ninth 3

35. Abba Theodore of the Ninth [milestone from Alexandria] said, "If God lays to our account our indifference in prayers and in psalm singing, we cannot be saved."

36. Abba Theōnas said, "We are taken prisoner by the passions of the flesh because of our lack of mental attention in our contemplation of God." Theōnas 1

37. Some of the brothers once came to test whether Abba John Colobos neither let his own *logismos* be distracted nor spoke of a matter pertaining to this world. They said to him, "We thank God; it rained heavily this year, and the palm trees drank. They are putting out shoots, and the brothers are finding [materials for] their handwork." Abba John said to them, "So it is with the Holy Spirit when he descends into the hearts of the holy ones: they are renewed and put out shoots in the presence of the fear of God." John Colobos 10

38. They also used to say of him that he once braided cord for two baskets and stitched it together as one basket but didn't realize it until [the cord] reached the wall, for his *logismos* was occupied in contemplation. John Colobos 11

39. The camel driver came one day to take [Abba John Colobos'] wares and go off to another place, but [Abba John], coming in to fetch the cord, forgot, having his thoughts fixed on God. So the camel driver alerted him again by knocking at the door, and again Abba John went in and forgot. When the camel driver knocked a third time, he went in saying, "Cord, camel." John Colobos 31

40. Abba John Colobos said, "I am like somebody sitting beneath a large tree who sees wild beasts and serpents coming at him. When he cannot withstand them, he runs up into the tree and is saved. So it is with me: I stay in my cell and see the evil *logismoi* above me. And when I do not have the strength [to oppose] them, I flee to God in prayer, and I am saved from the enemy." John Colobos 12

41. There was an elder at Scete who was hard working so far as his body was concerned but was inexact with words. He went to Abba John Colobos to ask him about forgetfulness. Having heard the saying from him, he John Colobos 18

returned to his cell and forgot what Abba John said to him; so he went again to ask him. Having heard the saying from him again, in the same way he returned from him. When he reached his own cell again, he also forgot the saying he had heard. He went on like this many times and was overcome by forgetfulness. Later on he met the elder again and said to him, "Do you know, Abba, I forgot what you said to me again, but I did not come [back] so as not to trouble you?" But Abba John said to him, "Go and light a lamp," and he lit one. He spoke to him again, "Get some other lamps and light them from it," and he did so. And Abba John said to the elder, "The lamp was not damaged in any way because you lit the other lamps from it, was it?" "No," he said. So the elder said, "Neither is John; if the whole of Scete were to come to me, it would not distract me from the grace of God, so come whenever you wish, without questioning." And thus, by the patient endurance of them both, God removed the forgetfulness from the elder. This was the practice of the Scetiotes: to give eagerness to the combatants and to oblige themselves to win each other over for the good.

John Colobos 24

42. Abba John Colobos said to his disciple, "Let us honor the One, and all will honor us. If we despise the One who is God, everybody will despise us, and we are on the road to perdition."

John Colobos 27

43. He also said, "Prison means staying soberly in the cell, ever mindful of God, for that is [the meaning of] 'I was in prison and you came to me'" [Matt 25:36].

John Colobos 19

44. A brother asked Abba John, "What am I to do? There is a brother who often comes to take me to work, but I am ailing and weak; I am exhausted by that sort of thing. So what shall I do [to keep] the commandment?" In answer the elder said to him, "Caleb said to Joshua the son of Nun, 'I was forty years old when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent you and me to this land, and

now I am eighty-five. I am as strong now as I was then to go to and to come back from war' [see Josh 7:10-11]. So do you too go [to work] if you are capable of coming out like you enter in. If you are not capable, remain in your cell weeping for your sins; for if they find you sorrowing, they will not oblige you to go out."

Joseph of Panephō 6

45. Abba Joseph said to Abba Lot, "You cannot become a monk unless you become altogether a flaming fire" [see Heb 1:7; Ps 103:4].

Isidore 4

46. Said Abba Isidore, the priest of Scete, "For my part, when I was younger and staying in my cell, I had no time limits for *synaxis*, for both night and day were *synaxis*."

Isaac the Theban 2

47. Concerning Abba Apollo, they used to say that he had a disciple named Isaac, trained to perfection in every good work, and he had acquired *hēsychia* at the Holy Eucharist. When he was going to church, he would not allow anybody to keep him company. His explanation was to the effect that everything is good in its own time, "for there is a time for every matter" [see Eccl 3:1]. And when the service was terminated, he would seek to regain his cell like somebody chased by fire. An allowance of a single dried loaf and a cup of wine was often given to the brothers after the *synaxis*, but he would not take it, not to reject the blessing of the brothers but to maintain the *hēsychia* of the *synaxis*. It happened that he fell sick, and the brothers came to visit him when they heard of it. As they sat, they were saying, "Abba Isaac, why do you run away from the brothers after the *synaxis*?" and he told them, "I am not running away from the brothers but from the evil craftiness of the demons. For if a person has a lighted lamp and hangs around, standing out in the wind, it is extinguished. So we who are enlightened by the Holy Eucharist, if we remain outside the cell, our mind is obscured." Such was the way of life of holy Isaac.

Cassian 6

48. Abba Cassian recounted how an elder dwelling in the desert called upon God to grant him never to nod off when a spiritual discourse was in progress but immediately to fall asleep if somebody tried to introduce malicious or vain subjects, so that his ears would not taste such poison. This same [elder] further said that the devil was a devotee of vain talking and the opponent of all spiritual teaching, using this example, "I was once talking to some brothers about what is beneficial," he said, "when they were overcome by such a deep sleep that they could not even raise their eyelids. Wishing to demonstrate the operation of the demon, I introduced some vain talk, at which they immediately and cheerfully awoke. Then I said, 'Until now we were discussing heavenly matters, and all your eyes were in the grip of sleep; but when a vain subject was introduced, you all awoke with eagerness.' So I beg of you, dear ones, that being aware of the operation of the evil demon, watch out for yourselves and be vigilant against nodding off when you are doing or listening to something of a spiritual nature."

49. Abba Macarius the Great said, "The soul ought to gather her own considerations together in psalm singing with sorrow for sin, to have nothing else in mind but waiting for the Lord and to conserve its inborn love for him alone. Just as a mother gathers her own children together in the house, instructing and admonishing them, so ought the soul to gather up her own considerations from everywhere they are wandering, like her own children, even if they are scattered by sin, so as to gather up her *logismoi* constantly (to the best of her ability) and to await the Lord in firm faith so that, when he comes to her, he may teach her true, undistracted prayer directed solely to interceding with him."

50. A brother asked an elder, "Tell me how I am to be saved," but the elder said to him, "If you wish to be saved, love the Lord your God with all your heart and

keep his commandments; do not lie, do not swear, do not speak idle, malicious, or arrogant words. Do no evil, do not covet, do not steal, do not indulge in *porneia*. Do not love only those who love you [see Matt 5:44-46] but also those who do you wrong; pray for those who afflict you, and ever give thanks to God for the afflictions that come upon you, whether from demons or from people. Sing with understanding, pray with sorrow for sin, give to one who asks insofar as you are able; tame the belly with self-discipline, bridle anger with long-suffering, hate the passions, love the virtues, and always have God (who sees your deeds and thoughts all the time) before your eyes. Do nothing for appearances before folk, but consider yourself to be more sinful than everybody else. Cleanse your *logismoi* by confession and the appropriate fruits of repentance. Do not hate a person in your entire life in order not to be hated by the Lord your God, for the Lord says 'Not they who say unto me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but they that do the will of my Father who is in heaven' [Matt 7:21], and the apostle [says], 'Be not deceived; neither thieves nor those who commit *porneia* nor the covetous nor drunkards nor revilers shall inherit the kingdom of God' [see 1 Cor 6:9-10], and again 'Refrain from every evil deed, but do every good action' [see 1 Thess 5:22; Col 1:10]. These are the characteristics of those who fear the Lord: to be faithful, sober, compliant, without guile, no lover of money, not arrogant but humble, gentle, peaceable, fervent for what is good, immovable toward evil."

51. He also said, "'What shall I render to the Lord for all he has done for us?' [Ps 115:3]. From nonexistence he created us; for us he caused heaven and earth, air and sea, and everything in them to come into being out of nonbeing. When, seduced by the devil, we fell into sin and through sin into death, he did not despise us but both established a law for our aid and sent out prophets to reprove evils and teach virtue. He stationed angels

as guardians of our life, and (the acme of his benefits done to us, the most wonderful and the highest) he sent out his only-begotten Son so that we who believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and who keep his commandments might also be found worthy of the kingdom of heaven. For, being true God, the Word of the Father came to earth and was born, having taken flesh of the holy Virgin. When he had taken up residence in the world and demonstrated to us the entire way of humility and of obedience and of every saving virtue, he suffered for us, was crucified on our behalf. He died and was buried; he arose and was taken up to his Father who has no beginning. With these and suchlike thoughts in mind and keeping the indelible recollection of them, let us serve the Lord in fear, so that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit might also come to us and make a dwelling with us, according to the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, who says, 'We will come to him' [John 14:23], and again, 'I will dwell with them and walk among them' [Lev 26:11; 2 Cor 6:16]. And what the apostle says stimulates and prepares us for this: 'Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks' [1 Thess 5:17], and, 'I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved' [Ps 16:8], and, 'Pay attention to yourself in order to pay attention to God.' If we do not pay attention also to God, we wander into pathless [wastes], but if we constantly pay attention, we sing to him unending hymns of thanksgiving and of the indescribable wonders of God achieved on our behalf, so that we might also accede to the benefits of eternity."

Basil of Caesarea, hom. in *Attende tibi ipsi, PG* 31:197C–217B

52. Abba Moses said, "Nobody can enter the army of Christ unless he becomes completely as fire, despising reputation and repose; this in order to excise the desires of the flesh and to keep all the commandments of God."

53. He also said, "Let us flee from loose talk, lest the burning of it consume the fruits of our labors."

54. He also said, "Let us acquire piety, decency, simplicity, gentleness, and respect for all folk, and let us flee away from loose talk, the mother of evils."

55. When Abba Poemen was young, he once went to an elder to ask him about three *logismoi*, but when he got to the elder, he forgot one of them and went back to his cell. When he went to get the key, he remembered the *logismos* he had forgotten. He left the key and went back to the elder. The elder said to him, "You were quick in coming back, brother," and [Poemen] explained to him, "When I put out my hand to get the key, I remembered the word I was looking for and did not open the lock of the cell; that is why I came immediately"—and the length of the journey was very great. The elder said to him, "Well done, Poemen. Your name will be spoken in the entire land of Egypt." Poemen 1

56. Abba Amoun visited Abba Poemen and said to him, "If I go to my neighbor's cell or he visits me for some need, we are afraid to speak with each other in case some alien discourse raises its head." "Well done," the elder said to him. "Youth needs vigilance." Abba Amoun said to him, "So then how did the elders used to speak?" and he said to him, "The elders who were advanced had nothing else in mind or any alien matter in their mouth that they might speak it." Abba Amoun said to him, "So if a necessity arises to speak with my neighbor, do you want me to speak of the Scriptures or of the sayings of the elders?" Said the elder, "If you cannot keep silent, it is better to speak of the sayings of the elders and not of the Scriptures, for *there* is no small danger." Amoun 2

57. Abba Poemen was asked about *logismoi*, and he said, "If we keep up our practice and are attentively vigilant, we shall not find any defilement in ourselves." Poemen 165

Poemen 32

58. They used to say of Abba Poemen that when he was about to go to *synaxis*, he would sit examining his own *logismoi* for one hour and then come out.

Poemen 65

59. Abba Poemen said that somebody asked Abba Paisios, "What am I to do with my soul, for it is insensitive and does not fear God?" and he said to him, "Go and attach yourself to a person who fears God, and from your contact with that person you too will learn to fear God from him."

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60. He also said, "The beginning and the end are the fear of God, for so it is written, 'The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord' [Ps 110:10], and also, when Abraham had completed the altar, the Lord said to him 'Now I know that you fear God'" [Gen 22:12].

Poemen 160

61. He also said that these three things are of capital importance: that you fear the Lord, that you pray to God without ceasing, and that you do good to your neighbor.

Poemen 48

62. Abba Poemen said, "If somebody makes a new heaven and a new earth [see Rev 21:1], he ought not to be unconcerned."

Poemen S 18

63. He also said, "Keep away from every person who is contentious in discussion."

Paul the Barber 2

64. Abba Paul and Timothy his brother were barbers at Scete, and they were importuned by the brothers. Timothy said to his brother, "What do we want with this profession? Throughout the whole day we are not allowed to practice *hēsychia*." In response Abba Paul said to him, "The *hēsychia* of the night is enough for us if our thoughts are wakeful toward God."

Peter the Pionite 2

65. Somebody asked Abba Peter, [the disciple] of Abba Lot, "My soul is at peace when I am in the cell, but when a brother visits me and speaks about external matters, my soul is troubled." Abba Peter told him that Abba Lot used to say to him, "Your key opens your door." The brother

said to him, "What is that saying?" and he said, "If somebody visits you, you say, 'How are you?' or 'Where have you come from? How are the brothers? Were they hospitable to you or not?'—and then you open the door to your brother, and you hear things you don't want to hear." "That is how it is," he said. "So what will one do if somebody comes to him?" The elder said, "Complete sorrow is what teaches; where there is not sorrow, one cannot be protected." "When I am in the cell," said the brother to him, "sorrow is with me, but whenever someone comes to me or I come out of the cell, I do not find it." The elder said, "[Sorrow] was never made subordinate to you, but it is with you as if for your use." The brother said, "What does this saying mean?" Said the elder, "If a man labors away at something, whenever he seeks it for his own need, he will find it."

66. Strongly besought by a brother to speak, Abba Sisōēs said, "Remain in your cell with vigilance and commit yourself to God with many tears, and you will experience repose."

67. A brother asked Abba Sisōēs, "I want to keep a watch on my heart, but I am not able." The elder said to him, "How are we to keep a watch on the heart when the door of our tongue lies open?" Tithoēs 3

68. Once when Abba Silvanus was living at Mount Sinai, his disciple, Zacharias, went away on an errand and said to the elder, "Open up the water and irrigate the garden." Going out, he covered his face with his cowl, and he could only see his own footsteps. A brother came visiting him at that time and, seeing him from a distance, observed what he was doing. When the brother came up to him, he said, "Tell me, Abba, why were you watering the garden like that, your face covered with the cowl?" The elder said to him, "It was so that my eyes might not see the trees and my mind be distracted from the work of God to them, my son." Silvanus 4

Silvanus 11 69. Abba Moses asked Abba Silvanus, "Can a person make a fresh start each day?" and Abba Silvanus said, "If he is a toiler, a person can make a fresh start every day and every hour."

Silvanus 6 70. Some folk once asked Abba Silvanus, "In what way of life did you toil in order to have acquired this understanding?" and he answered them, "I never allowed into my heart a *logismos* that would anger God."

Serapion 3 71. Abba Serapion said, "Just as the soldiers of the emperor standing before him dare not turn their attention to the left or to the right, so nothing of the enemy can frighten the person standing before God and being in fear of him all the time."

Synklētikē S 5 72. Amma Synklētikē said, "Children, we all know how to be saved, but, by our own negligence, we fall short of salvation."

Synklētikē S 6 73. She also said, "Let us be on our guard, for it is through our senses that thieves get in, even though we do not wish it. For how can a house not be blackened when there is smoke blowing around outside and the windows are open?"

Synklētikē S 7 74. She also said, "We must arm ourselves against the demons, for they approach from without and are set in motion from within. The soul is like a ship: sometimes it is sunk by a mighty swell from without, sometimes from within because the bilge is overflowing. So too are we sometimes lost through sinful practices on the outside, sometimes defiled by *logismoi* within. So we must watch out for the attacks of the spirits from outside and drain off the impurities of the *logismoi* within."

Synklētikē S 8 75. She also said, "We are never free of concern here, for the Scripture says, 'Let him who stands see that he does not fall' [1 Cor 10:2]. We are sailing in darkness, for it is said by the sacred psalmist David that our life is a sea [see Ps 129:1]. But with the parts of the sea, some can be full

of monsters, while others are quite calm. We seem to be sailing in the calm part of the sea, while the worldlings are in the danger zones. We are sailing by day, travelling under the sun of righteousness, they by night, borne along as a result of ignorance. Yet it is often possible for the worldling who encounters a storm and peril, calling for help and keeping watch, to save his own craft—while we who are in calm waters can be sunk through negligence, having let go the rudder of righteousness."

76. Abba Hyperechios said, "Let your consciousness always dwell on the kingdom of heaven, and soon you shall inherit it." Hyperechios 7

77. He also said, "Let the life of a monk be burning up sin in imitation of the angels." N 680

78. Abba Ōrisios said, "I think that if a person does not guard his own heart well, he forgets and disregards everything he has heard; thus the enemy finds a place in him and overthrows him. Likewise, a lamp that has been prepared and is shining is gradually extinguished if it is neglected and not provided with oil; and then darkness overcomes it. And not only that: sometimes a mouse coming by will seek to eat the wick. This it cannot do before the oil is consumed; but if it sees that there is no light or any heat of fire, then, in its desire to consume the wick, it overturns the lamp. If it is an earthen lamp, it is broken, but if of bronze, it is prepared for use again by the householder. Likewise, little by little, the Holy Spirit recedes from the neglected soul until finally its warmth is extinguished, and then the enemy, devouring the fervor of the soul, destroys the body by iniquity. But if a person is well disposed toward God and has simply been overpowered by negligence, the compassionate God, by sending him fear [of God] and the recollection of retribution, prepares him to be vigilant and to keep a watch on himself securely henceforth until his visitation." Ōrsisios 2

see Matōēs 13

79. A brother asked an elder, "What am I to do? For my tongue is troubling me. When I go among brothers, I am unable to control myself: I pass judgment on them, reproving them in every good work." In response the elder said, "If you cannot control yourself, run away into solitude, for he who lives among brothers ought not to be a square peg but a round one; [he ought to] be alert to win them all over and to keep his own mind in check for the fear of God."

N 398

80. Some of the fathers used to tell how there was an elder who was found worthy to receive great gifts [*charismata*] from God and how he became famous. His name reached the emperor on account of his virtue; so the emperor sent for him in order to be able to enjoy the distinction of his prayers. When he had met with him and benefited greatly, [the emperor] offered him gold. The elder accepted it and, when he got back to his own place, began cultivating a field and another property. Then someone possessed of a demon came to him (as usual), and the elder said to the demon, "Come on out of that which God has fashioned," but the demon said to him, "I will not obey you." "Why not?" asked the elder. "Because you have become as one of us," said the demon. "You have abandoned concern for God and have dedicated yourself to earthly concerns. That is why I will not obey you and come out."

N 266

81. One of the elders visited another elder, and, as they were conversing, one of them said, "I am dead to the world," and the other said, "Do not be so sure of yourself until you have departed out of this body. For [even] if you say, 'I have died,' Satan has not died."

N 650

82. An elder said, "Endeavour diligently not to sin, lest you offend God who dwells within you and chase him from your soul."

83. An elder said, "Struggle as hard as you can for a serious life in order to be set upright."

84. He also said, "Always have good things in mind so that you perform them; a person's thoughts are not hidden from God, so let your consciousness be cleansed of all evil."

85. An elder said, "It is impossible for your soul to be enlightened before you have first cleansed yourself."

86. He also said, "The bee makes honey wherever it goes; likewise, the monk too performs the work of God[3] wherever he goes." N 399

87. One of the fathers said, "The monk must fast with effort, sing with understanding, pray with attentiveness, ask of God with knowledge, and do no earthly thing but all that is spiritual; for of these the monk consists."

88. He also said, "It is shameful for us who are wasting time now to have a change of heart when we are in distress later on and there is no more [time] for us."

89. He also said, "Let us make a great effort for the good things to come and prepare ourselves for departure and not idly waste away our own time."

90. He also said, "Let us be sober, brothers; let us not relax in the hour of conflict and be drawn into the contemplation of wicked deeds, to ensure that the evil *logismos* not find a way into our souls."

91. An elder said, "In the evening and at dawn the monk ought to take account of himself, 'Of the things that God desires, what did I not do? And of what he desires, what did I do?' He ought to repent his whole life long, examining himself in this way. That is how the monk must be; that is how Abba Arsenios lived." N 264

92. An elder said, "If somebody loses silver or gold, he can find some replacement, but he who loses time will never find it again." N 265

[3] *To ergon tou theou* = *opus Dei*; see 11.68: *ergasia tou theou*.

N 651 93. An elder said that it was not necessary to be concerned about anything other than the fear of God, for he would say, "Even if I were obliged to be concerned about some bodily need, I never gave it a thought beforehand."

N 267; see 11.112 94. An elder said, "As the soldier and the hunter going into action care not whether another is wounded or kept safe, but each one contends for himself alone, so must the monk."

N 268 95. An elder said, "In the same way that one cannot wrong the person who is close to the emperor, neither can Satan do anything to us if our soul is close to God, for he says, 'Draw close to me and I will draw close to you' [Zech 1:3]. But since we are continually distracted, the enemy easily snatches away our wretched soul toward shameful passions."

N 473a 96. An elder said, "A person must watch over his work so that it not be lost, for if someone works hard and keeps no watch, he reaps no benefit. But if one works a little and keeps a watch, that person's work stands fast."

N 652 97. The elder also said, "From a small task to a great one of the things we do, one must bear in mind the aim and what is to be produced, whether in *logismoi* or in deeds."

N 377 98. An elder said, "Whether you are sleeping or waking up or doing something else, if God is before your eyes, the enemy can in no way make you afraid. If this *logismos* remains within a person, the power of God remains with him too."

N 269 99. An elder said, "When you get up in the morning, say to yourself, 'Body, work in order to feed; soul, be on your guard in order to inherit the kingdom of heaven.'"

N 420; see 21.45 100. A brother asked an elder, "What am I to do about my carelessness?" The elder said to him, "Unless you

root out this little weed that is carelessness, it will become a great wart."

101. A brother told an elder, "I am not aware of any conflict in my heart." "That is because you are a building open on four sides," the elder said to him. "Whoever wants to comes in and out without you being aware of it. If you have a door and close it, disallowing entry to anybody (meaning to wicked *logismoi*), then you will see them standing outside, doing battle with you." N 270

102. They used to say of an elder that when his *logismoi* said to him, "Relax today and repent tomorrow," he would contradict them: "No indeed; today I shall repent, and tomorrow let the will of God be done." N 271

103. An elder said, "Unless our inner person be on its guard, it is impossible to protect the outer person too." N 272

104. An elder said, "There are three powers of Satan that impel one into all kinds of sin. First, forgetfulness; second, negligence; third, desire. It is through desire that a person falls. If the mind is on the watch against forgetting, it will not become negligent, and if it not be negligent, it will not come to desire. And if one does not desire, by the grace of Christ he never falls." N 273

105. An elder said, "Practice silence; be anxious about nothing; at lying down and getting up, apply yourself to your meditation with fear of God, and you will not fear the assaults of the ungodly." N 274

106. An elder said, "Satan is a rope maker: as long as you provide him with threads, he braids." He said this referring to *logismoi*. N 400

107. An elder said to a brother, "The devil is the enemy, and you are the house, for the devil makes no end of throwing whatever he likes into you, pouring in every kind of uncleanness; it is up to you to receive or not to receive it. If you are negligent, your house fills up with N 275

uncleanness, and you can no longer enter it. So do you little by little cast out whatever he first throws in, and the house will remain clean through the grace of Christ."

N 276 108. One of the fathers said, "When the eyes of the animal are covered, then it turns around the mill; but if they are not covered, it does not turn [it]. Similarly, if the devil succeeds in covering the eyes of the heart, he degrades a person in every kind of sin; whereas if the eyes of the heart are enlightened, he can easily escape from him."

Olympios 1 109. A priest of the idols came to Scete and slept at an elder's. Seeing his way of life, he said to him, "Do you receive no visions from your God?" "No," said the elder, and the priest said, "All the mysteries are revealed to us when we perform small services [*leitourgias*], while you who labor so hard, keeping watch by night and [performing] such great services [*leitourgias*][4] you say you [receive] nothing? You surely have evil *logismoi* in your hearts, and that is what distances you from your God and [why] he does not make his mysteries known to you." The fathers were amazed when they heard this, saying, "Our impure *logismoi* distance us from God."

N 277 110. They said that there were seven persons living on the mountain of Abba Anthony and that, when the figs were ripe, one of them would keep watch to drive off the birds. There was an elder there who, when he was keeping watch on his day, used to cry out, "Away with you, evil *logismoi* inside—and birds outside!"

N 278 111. There was a brother soaking his own palm fronds at The Cells; as he sat down to braid them, the *logismos* said to him, "Go and visit such and such an elder," but again he thought and said to himself, "I am going in a day or two." Again the *logismos* said to him, "What will

[4] N.b., *leitourgias* has both meanings of the word "services."

you do if he dies? You can talk to him about the harvest at the same time." "But it is not [harvest]time," he thought to himself again, then once more he reasoned, saying, "But since you are cutting reeds, it is [harvest] time," yet he said, "I will finish the palm fronds, and then I am going." Again he said to himself, "But the weather is good now," so, abandoning the soaked palm fronds, he got up, took his sheepskin, and set out.

Now there was an elder living close to him who had the gift of second sight. When he saw the brother running by, he called out to him, "Prisoner, prisoner, come here!" When he came, the elder said to him, "Get back to your cell," and the brother described to him the warfare [he was having]. Arriving at his own cell, he prostrated himself, at which the demons called out with a loud voice, saying, "O monks, you have conquered us!" and the rush mat beneath him became as though it were a burning fire, while they became invisible as does smoke; he had learned about their stratagems.

112. An elder said, "Let us be vigilant, brethren, let us be sober in prayers, let us devote our time to God so we can be saved, doing what pleases him. In battle a soldier is only looking out for his own life, likewise the huntsman too; let us be made to resemble them. He who lives according to God lives with him: 'I will dwell and walk among them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people'" [see 2 Cor 6:16; Lev 26:12; Ezek 37:27]. N 653; see 11.94

113. One of the fathers said, "Be on your guard against the brothers who praise you, against *logismoi*, and against those who set their neighbor at naught; for nobody knows anything. The robber was on the cross, and he was justified for one word [see Luke 23:40-43]; Judas was counted among the apostles; in one night he lost all his labor and went down from heaven into Hades. So let nobody doing good deeds boast; for all who trusted in themselves fell in a twinkling of an eye." See Xanthias 1

N 663

114. An elder said, "If you see that your brother has sinned, do not ascribe the sin to him but to the one who is doing battle with him, saying, 'Ah me! He got the worst of it—and so could I.' Then weep, seeking God's help, and have compassion on one who fell against his will. Nobody *wants* to sin against God, but we are all led astray."

N 279

115. They used to recount how the brothers were gathered around the bed of an elder at Scete who was at the point of death, weeping as they made him ready. But he opened his eyes and laughed; he laughed three times! The brothers implored him, saying, "Tell us, Abba, why we are weeping and you are laughing?" "In the first place, I laughed because you are all afraid of death," he told them; "secondly, because you are unprepared; thirdly, I laughed because I am passing from labor to repose"—and he promptly surrendered his soul.

N 403 [shorter version: 12.28]

116. An elder said, "By the same token that the porter is not authorized to admit a stranger without the permission of the master of the house, neither can the enemy enter unless he be received [as a guest]. So when you pray, say, 'Lord, you know everything; I am a beast and know nothing [see Ps 72:22]. It is you who have brought me to the order of this salvation. Save me Lord, for "I am your servant and the son of your handmaiden" [Ps 116:16]; save me, Lord, according to your will'" [see 1 Tim 2:4].

N 654

117. A brother living at The Cells came to one of the fathers and told him about a *logismos* on account of which he was being afflicted. Said the elder to him, "You have relinquished the thing that is upright and precious, the fear of God, and taken up to keep for yourself a staff of reed (meaning evil *logismoi*). Instead, acquire the fire that is fear of God; then when a *logismos* comes to approach you, it is burned up like a reed by the fire. No evil thing is effective against the person who has the fear of God."

118. An elder said, "If you have renounced the things of the flesh for the sake of God, do not let indulgence draw you while you are residing in your cell into lamenting father or mother or the love of brothers, the tender affection of sons or daughters, or the love of a wife. For you have abandoned everything for the sake of God; so recall the hour of your death and that not one of those persons will be able to help you [then]." N 405

119. An elder said, "There are two great and powerful roots. So, if a person maintains these, he will (by the grace of God) overcome all the passions, [meaning] to have the fear of God in his heart and humble-mindedness."

120. One of the elders said, "These three things are befitting for the monk: voluntary exile, poverty, and silence with vigilance." Andrew 1

121. One of the fathers said that there was a hard-working monk who used to keep a careful watch over himself, but then he happened to become a little negligent. In his negligence, he condemned himself and said, "My soul, how long are you going to be negligent of your own salvation and not fear the judgment of God, lest you be taken by surprise in this negligence and be delivered into eternal punishments?" Saying these things to himself, he roused himself up for the work of God. N 401

While he was offering the *synaxis*, the demons came and began throwing him into confusion, but he said to them, "How long are you going to trouble me? Were you not satisfied with my former negligence?" The demons said to him, "While you were negligent, we neglected you; but when you were roused up against us again, we too were roused up against you." When he heard this, he roused himself up yet more in the fear of God, and, by the grace of God, he started to make progress.

122. A brother who was being tempted went to an elder and laid before him the temptations he was enduring. N 402

The elder said to him, "Let not the temptations that come upon you alarm you, for to the extent that the enemies see the soul being raised up and making contact with God, they rage and are consumed with jealousy. It is impossible for God and his angels not to be on hand in our temptations; only do not cease calling upon him in great humility. When something like this happens, call to mind the presence of God our helper, our weakness, and the savagery of our enemy—and you access the help of God."

123. An elder was asked, "What does it mean to pray to God undistracted?" and he replied, "To heed the commandments of God and his entire will in purity."

124. A brother asked an elder, "What is the cultivation of the soul so that it brings forth a good crop?" The elder said to him, "In my opinion the cultivation of the soul is *hēsychia* with vigilance, continence, physical mortification, much bodily prayer, and not paying attention to people's faults."

N 378 125. One of the fathers said, "Unless you first hate, you are not able to love. Unless you hate sin, you do not do what is right, as it is written, 'Desist from evil and do good' [Ps 36:27]. But in all these things it is the intention that is sought by God everywhere. For Adam transgressed the commandment of God when he was in Paradise, while Job, sitting on the dung heap, kept it. God looks for a person to have a good intention and always to be in awe of him."

N 407 126. An elder said, "There was a very rich farmer who, wishing to teach his sons farming, said to them, 'Children, you are aware how I have become rich. You too shall be rich if you will listen to me.' 'Please, Father, tell us how,' they said to him. He, tricking them into not being negligent, said to them, 'There is one day in the year on which a man becomes rich if he is found

working. But, on account of my advanced age, I have forgotten which day it is. So do not neglect to work every day in case that blessed day turns out to be a day on which you are not working, and you have worked all the year round in vain.' So too shall we find the way of life if we work unceasingly."

127. Amma Sarah said, "I place my foot on the ladder and set death in front of my eyes before I go up with it." Sarah 6

12

One Should Pray without Ceasing

Arsenios 30

1. They used to say of Abba Arsenios that on Saturday night when Sunday was about to dawn he used to put the sun behind him and stretch out his hands to heaven, praying until the sun shone on his face; and then he would sit down.

Agathon 9

2. Some brothers asked Abba Agathon, "In our ways of life, Father, which virtue demands the most effort?" He said to them, "Forgive me; I reckon there is no exertion like praying to God without distraction, for every time a man wishes to pray, the enemy [wishes] to cut him off, knowing that he is impeded in no other way than by prayer to God. In every activity a person practices and pursues, he attains some repose in it, but prayer requires struggle until the last breath."

Bessarion 4a

3. Abba Doulas, the disciple of Abba Bessarion, told this: "Once I came to my *abba*'s cell and found him standing in prayer with his hands stretched out to heaven. He remained like that for fourteen days. After that, he called me and said, 'Follow me.' We went out and travelled in the desert. I was thirsty and said to him, 'Abba, I am thirsty.' The elder took his sheepskin and went about a stone's throw away from me. After he had prayed, he brought it to me full of water. We journeyed on toward Lyco until we came to Abba John. When we had embraced him, we offered a prayer, then we sat down to speak of the vision that he saw. Abba Bessarion said, 'A decree came out from the Lord that

the temples be thrown down.' That is what happened; they were thrown down."

4. An elder said, "If you become despondent, pray as it is written: with fear and trembling [see Ps 2:11], with sobriety and with vigilance [see 1 Pet 5:8]. That is how one should pray, especially because the malignant and mischievous ones, our invisible enemies, wish to treat us despitefully in that [activity]." N 696

5. Again he said, "When an [adverse] *logismos* arises in your heart, do not seek to replace some things with others by prayer but sharpen the sword of tears against the adversary." N 697

6. It was reported to the blessed Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus, by the *abba* of the monastery he had in Palestine, "Thanks to your prayers, we did not neglect the rule but are diligent in celebrating the third [hour], the sixth, the ninth, and at lamp lighting," but he reprimanded them and declared, "You are clearly deficient in prayer the other hours of the day, for the true monk must unceasingly have prayer and psalmody in his heart." Epiphanius 3

7. Abba Moses once went to the cistern to draw some water; he saw Abba Zachary praying by the cistern, and the Spirit of God was resting on him as a dove. Zachary 2

8. Abba Isaiah said, "When there was a love feast [*agapē*] and the brothers were eating and talking to each other, the priest of Pelusium reproved them, saying, 'Be quiet, brothers; I know a brother eating with you, and his prayer is going up before God like fire.'" Isaiah 4

9. Abba Lot visited Abba Joseph and said to him, "Abba, to the best of my ability I do a little fasting, praying, and meditating. I maintain *hēsychia* and purge my thoughts to the best of my ability. What else should I be doing?" Standing up, the elder stretched out his hands to heaven, Joseph of Panephō 7

and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire; and he said to him, "If you are willing, become entirely like fire."

Lucius 1

10. Some monks called Euchētes[1] once visited Abba Lucius who was at the Ninth [milestone], and the elder asked them, "What is your manual labor?" "We do not set our hand to manual labor," they said, "but we 'pray without ceasing' [1 Thess 5:17] as the Apostle said." "Do you not eat?" said the elder. "Yes," they said, and the elder said, "Who prays for you when you are eating?" Again he said to them, "Do you not sleep?" "Yes," they said, and the elder said, "Who prays for you when you are asleep?" and at this they did not find him an answer. And he said to them, "Forgive me, but see: you do not do as you say. I will show you that I pray without ceasing while working at my manual labor. I soak a few rushes for myself, then sitting down with God, I braid them into a rope, saying, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, after your great goodness; according to the multitude of your mercies, blot out my offenses'" [Ps 50:1], and he said to them, "Is that not prayer?" "Yes," they said, and the elder said, "When I remain working and praying all day long, I make sixteen coins, more or less. I put two of them at the door and eat with the rest. He who takes the two coins prays for me when I eat and when I sleep, and by the grace of God it is fulfilled for me to 'pray without ceasing.'"

Macarius 19

11. Some people asked Macarius, "How ought we to pray?" The elder said to them, "There is no need to make 'vain repetitions' [Matt 6:7] but to frequently stretch out your hands and say 'Lord, as you wish and know how to, have mercy on me,' and if warfare persists, 'Lord, help me.' He knows what is appropriate, and he will act mercifully with us."

[1] The "praying ones" (Messalians).

12. In the time of Julian the Apostate, when he went down into Persia, he sent a demon to travel quickly to the west and bring him back an answer of some kind. When the demon came to a place where a solitary monk was living, he remained there immobile for ten days, unable to go any farther by day or by night because the monk did not stop praying during those same days. So he returned empty-handed to the one who had sent him. "Why have you taken so long?" he asked him. The demon answered him, "I was not only delayed but came back empty-handed too. I waited ten days watching Publius the monk to [see whether he would] desist from praying so I could go on; but desist he did not. So I could go no farther, and I returned empty-handed." Then the impious Julian became angry and said, "I will have my revenge on him when I return," but within a few days he was slain—by Divine Providence. One of the officers accompanying him went and sold all he possessed and gave [the proceeds] to the poor. Then he approached [Publius] the elder to become a monk. He became a great *askētēs* and died in the Lord. N 409

13. They used to say of Abba Tithoēs that if he did not quickly lower his hands when he stood in prayer, his mind was rapped away on high. So if ever he happened to be praying together with a brother, he would make a point of quickly lowering his hands so that his mind would not be rapped away on high and tarry [there]. Tithoēs 1

14. A brother visited an elder who had second sight and pleaded with him, "Pray for me, Father, for I am weak." In answer the elder said to the brother, "One of the holy ones once said that he who takes oil in his hand to anoint a sick person first partakes of the richness of the oil himself. Likewise, he who prays for a brother, even before that one benefits, receives a portion of benefit himself through his disposition to love. Let us then pray for each other, my brother, so we might be healed; for N 635

this the apostle advocates, saying, 'Pray for one another that you may be healed'" [Jas 5:16].

15. An elder used to say, "To pray continually quickly puts one in a right frame of mind."

N 379

16. One of the fathers used to say, "In the same way that it is impossible for one to see his face in muddy water, so the soul is incapable of contemplative prayer if it has not been purged of alien *logismoi*."

Xoios 2

17. An elder once went to Mount Sinai, and as he was coming away from there, a brother met him on the way. Sighing deeply, he began saying to the elder, "We are distressed by a drought, Abba." The elder said to him, "Why are you not praying and interceding with God?" The brother told him, "We are praying and holding processions, and it does not rain." Said the elder, "You surely are not praying fervently; do you want to know that such is the case? Let us stand in prayer." Stretching his hands out to heaven, he prayed—and rain fell immediately. The brother was terrified when he saw it; he fell down and revered him, but the elder fled that place right away.

N 280

18. Some brothers recounted, "We once visited some elders, and after the customary prayer was offered, we embraced each other and sat down. When we had conversed and were about to leave, we asked for a prayer to be offered. One of the elders said to us, 'Why? Have we not prayed?' We said to him, 'A prayer was offered when we came in, Abba, and we have been talking until now,' but he said, 'Forgive me, brothers; there is a brother sitting and speaking with you who has offered one hundred and three prayers.' When he had said that, they offered a prayer and sent us on our way."

N 36

19. An anchorite saw one demon inciting another one to go and awaken a monk, and he heard the other one

saying, "I cannot do that because I did awaken him once. He got up and burned me, singing psalms and praying."

20. An elder was asked, "What is 'to pray without ceasing'?" [1 Thess 5:17], and he replied, "It is the petition sent up to God from the very foundation of the heart, requesting what is appropriate. For it is not only when we stand for prayer that we are praying; true prayer is when you can pray all the time within yourself."

21. There was a brother in the desert practicing *hēsychia* in his own cell. He was being severely afflicted by *accidie* [inciting him] to go out of the cell. He would say to himself, "Soul, do not grow weary from remaining in your cell. Even if you are doing nothing, this suffices; you are offending or afflicting nobody, and you are not being afflicted by anyone. Just think from how many evils the Lord has delivered you through practicing *hēsychia* and praying to him without distraction. You speak no idle words; you do not hear what is inappropriate, nor do you see harmful things. You have one battle: against *accidie*. God is capable of depleting that too, as I acquire humility; for he knows my weakness in all things, and for that reason he permits my soul to be tried." As he turned these things over in his mind, great consolation came to him through unceasing prayer. This brother had that teaching from the holy fathers who had grown old in the desert.

22. An elder said, "It is a wonder the way we offer our prayers as though God were present and hearing our words, but as for our sins, we commit them as though he does not see."

23. A brother asked an elder, "Why is it that my *logismos* distracts me when I stand up to pray?" He answered, "From the beginning the devil was unwilling to worship the God [who reigns] over all. He was thrown out of heaven and became alienated from the kingdom of

God. For this reason it is he who distracts us from prayer, wishing to produce the same attitude in us too."

N 501 24. An elder said, "If you want to be a monk, be grimly determined, for he who does not have grim determination is not a monk." The brother said, "What am I to do if I find myself at an *agapē* of the fathers?" The elder said to him, "Instead of fasting, fix on unlimited prayer in humility." "And can I eat, listen to them talking, and pray?" he said, and the elder said, "Grim determination is capable of all things." The brother said, "What kind of *logismoi* ought I to have in my heart?" The elder said to him, "Everything a person thinks of, in heaven and below, is vanity; but he who perseveres in the recollection of God is in the [way of] truth."

25. An elder said, "Those who pray to God ought to offer prayer in peace, in *hēsychia*, and in profound tranquillity, not with indiscriminate and inappropriate cries; they ought to be attentive to God with heartache and watchful *logismoi*. Just as when one has an illness and is cauterized, he courageously and patiently endures the pain without noise or disturbance through self-control, while another utters inappropriate cries when he undergoes cauterization or surgery, [although] the pain is the same for the one who cries out and the one who does not, so too there are some people who offer [their] prayers with disturbance and noise, thus giving offense to those who hear. The servant of God must not be in a disturbed state but in humble-mindedness and *hēsychia*, as he says through the prophet, 'Upon whom shall I look other than on the humble and the one in *hēsychia* and he who trembles at my words?' [Isa 66:2]. They who live in *hēsychia* edify everybody. We find in the apostle that he says he who edifies his neighbor is greater, for he says, 'He that speaks in tongues edifies himself, but he that prophesies edifies the church, so greater is he that prophesies than he who speaks with tongues' [1

Cor 14:4-5]. Let each one therefore elect to edify each other, and he will be considered worthy of the kingdom of heaven."

26. An elder said, "Know yourself and you shall never fall. Give your soul its toil, that is, fervent prayer and love for God, before somebody else gives it wicked *logismoi*."

27. Somebody asked an elder, "Why is it that when I go out to work, I am neglectful of my soul?" The elder said to him, "You do not want to fulfill that which is written, for it says, 'I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be continually in my mouth' [Ps 33:2]. Whether you are indoors or outside, wherever you go, make no end of blessing God. Glorify God not only in word and deed but also in your mind. For the Divinity is not circumscribed in a place but, being in everything, sustains all things by his divine power." N 414

28. An elder said, "By the same token that a resident alien does not have the power to admit a stranger into the house, neither may the enemy enter unless he be received [as a guest]. When you pray, say, 'Lord, how shall I acquire you? You know I am a creature; you brought me to the order of this salvation. Save me Lord, for "I am your servant and the son of your handmaiden, Lord"'" [Ps 115:7]. N 403; see 11.116

13

One Must Joyfully Practice Hospitality and Show Compassion

Joseph of Panephō 1

1. Some of the fathers once went to Abba Joseph at Panephō to ask him about encountering brothers who were lodging with them, whether they should fraternize and converse with them. Before he was asked, the elder said to his disciple, "Take note of what I am going to do this day, and bear with me." Placing two cushions, one on the left, the other on his right, the elder said, "Sit down," and entering his cell, he put on old clothes then came out and passed through the midst of them. Then in he went again, put on his [own] clothes, and came out again and sat down among them. They were amazed at the elder's behavior. "Did you notice what I did?" he said to them. "Yes," they said, and he said to them, "I was not changed by that vulgar clothing, was I?" "No," they said; the elder also said, "And I was not changed by the fine clothing?" "No," they said. He said to them, "If then I am the same in both, just as the first one did not change me nor the second one do me any harm, so ought we to act when we encounter brothers, according to the holy Gospel: 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's,' it says [Luke 20:25]. When there are brothers present, let us receive them with joy; but when we are alone, then we need grief to remain with us." Those who heard this were amazed that he told them what was in their hearts before they asked him, and they glorified God.

Cassian 1

2. Abba Cassian said, "[Coming] from Palestine to Egypt, we visited one of the fathers. He entertained

us and was asked by us, 'Why is it that when you are entertaining brothers from elsewhere, you do not observe the rule of your fasting the way we observe it in Palestine?' 'Fasting is always with me,' he replied, 'but I cannot detain you with me forever. And although fasting is a useful and necessary practice, we do it because we choose to, whereas the law of God enjoins the practice of charity as a necessity. When I entertain one of you, I am serving Christ (as I am obliged to do) with full attention; and when I send you on your way, I can resume the rule of fasting, for "the companions of the bridegroom cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them; but when he is taken away from them, then will they fast" [Matt 9:15] to their hearts' content.'"

Cassian 3

3. He also said, "We visited another elder, and he had us eat. He urged us to partake of more food when we were already replete. When I said it was no longer possible, he answered, 'For my part I have now set the table six times for different brothers coming this way; inviting each one [to eat], I ate with them, and I am still hungry. Yet you, who have eaten but once, are you so full that you are no longer able to eat?'"

Moses 5

4. An order was once issued at Scete: "Fast this week, then celebrate Easter." It happened that some brothers from Egypt visited Abba Moses, and he cooked them a little food. Seeing the smoke, his neighbors reported it to the clergy: "Look, Moses has broken the order of the fathers and cooked himself some food." "It is we who will speak to him when he comes," they said. When Saturday came round, the clergy, well aware of the great discipline of Abba Moses, said to him in public, "Oh, Abba Moses, you have broken the order of men but fulfilled God's."

Poemen 58

5. A brother visited Abba Poemen in the [first] two weeks of Lent. After confessing his *logismoi* and attaining repose, he said to him, "I was almost prevented from

coming here today." "What for?" the elder said to him. The brother said, "I thought that because of Lent, [the door] would not be opened to me." Abba Poemen said to him, "We have not been taught to shut the wooden door but rather the [door] of the tongue."

Poemen 51 6. A brother said to Abba Poemen, "If I give my brother a little bread or something else, the demons denigrate the deed as being done to please men." The elder said to him, "Even if it is done to please men, let us give the brother what he needs," and he told him this parable: "There were two men, both farmers, living in one city. One of them sowed and reaped a small crop of poor quality, while the other neglected to sow and reaped nothing. When there is a famine, which of the two will be found to live?" "The one who reaped a small crop of poor quality," the brother replied. Said the elder to him, "So then let us too sow a little of poor quality so that we do not die in the famine."

Poemen 69b 7. A brother asked him, "Utter a saying for me." The elder said to him, "Toil at manual labor as much as you can in order to provide for him who is in need from it, for it is written, 'Sins are purged by almsgiving and by acts of faith'" [Prov 15:27a]. "What is an act of faith?" the brother said to him. "An act of faith," the elder said, "is to live in humble-mindedness and to perform [deeds of] mercy."

N 283 8. A brother visited an elder and said to him as he was leaving, "Forgive me, Abba, for I distracted you from your rule," but in answer he said to him, "My rule is to give you refreshment and to send you on your way in peace."

N 284 9. An anchorite who led a strictly disciplined existence was living near a *coenobion*. Some people happened to visit the *coenobion*, and they constrained him to eat out of hours. Afterward the brothers said to him, "Were

you not distressed just now, Abba?" but he said to them, "My distress is when I do my own will."

10. They used to say of an elder in Syria that he was living on the road to the desert and this was his activity: no matter at what time a monk came out of the desert, he would refresh him in full confidence. Once there came an anchorite, and he offered him refreshment, but he did not want to eat, saying, "For my part, I am fasting." In sorrow the elder said to him, "I beg of you, do not disregard your servant; do not despise me. Come, let us pray. Look, there is a tree here; let us follow the one to whom it inclines when he is kneeling down and praying." The anchorite knelt in prayer and nothing happened. The hospitable one knelt too, and straightaway the tree was bending over with him. Reassured, they gave thanks to God who performs wonders. N 285

11. Two brothers once came visiting an elder; it was the custom of the elder not to eat every day. When he saw the brothers, he joyfully welcomed them in, saying to them, "Fasting has its reward, but he who, out of love, eats again fulfills two commandments, for he abandoned his own will and fulfilled the commandment, having refreshed the brothers." N 288

12. There was an elder living at a place in the desert and, some considerable distance from him, another person: a Manichee who was a priest, or rather one of those whom they call priests. When he went to visit one of his coreligionists, nightfall overtook him at the place where the elder was. He was on the horns of a dilemma, wishing to knock, enter, and sleep at his place. But he knew the elder was aware that he was a Manichee and thought he would refuse to receive him. However, constrained by necessity, he knocked. When the elder opened the door, he recognized him and joyfully welcomed him in. He encouraged him to pray; he refreshed him and assigned him a place to sleep. Coming to himself in the night, the N 289

Manichee said in his astonishment, "How come he has no suspicion toward me? This is indeed a man of God." He came and fell at his feet, saying, "I am an orthodox from this day," and thus he remained with him.

N 287 13. There was a Theban monk who had the gift from God of service in providing each one who came to him with what he needed. Once he happened to be in a village distributing alms when a woman wearing old clothes came to him to receive alms. When he saw that she was wearing old clothes, he put down his hand to give her plenty, but his hand tightened up and he delivered little. Then another woman came to him, this one well dressed. Seeing her clothing, he put down his hand to give her a little, but his hand opened up and he delivered plenty. Inquiring about them both, he learned that the well-dressed one was an impoverished [member of] the nobility who used good clothes to save appearances, while the other was quite well off but dressed in old clothes for the receiving of alms.

N 286 14. There was a monk who had a brother living in penury in the world, and whatever [the monk] gained by the labor of his hands he used to give it to [his brother]; but the more he gave him, the poorer that one became. The brother went and explained the matter to an elder. The elder said to him, "If you will listen to me, do not give him anything anymore but say to him, 'Brother, when I had [the wherewithal], I provided you [with it]. Do you now bring me what you will make by the labor of your hands,' and if he brings you anything, take it from him. Then, whenever you see a stranger or a poor elder, give it [to him] and ask him to offer prayers for [your brother]."

The brother went his way and acted like that. When his worldly brother came, he spoke to him according to the elder's recommendation, and [the worldling] went away sorrowing. But then, on the first day, he took some

small vegetables from his garden and brought them to his brother. [The monk] took them and gave them to the elders, asking them to pray for [his brother in the world]; then, having received a blessing, he went back to his house. Again, in the same way, [the worldly brother] brought some vegetables and three loaves of bread—which the [monastic] brother took and disposed of as before—was blessed again, and went his way. Coming a third time, [the worldly brother] brought lots of victuals, wine, and fish. His [monastic] brother was amazed at the sight; he called in the poor and refreshed them. He said to his [worldly] brother, "Are you not in need of a few loaves?" "No, sir," came the reply. "When I was getting something from you, there came into my house something like fire and it consumed them. But I have more than enough ever since I have been receiving nothing from you and God is blessing me." The [monastic] brother went off and reported everything to the elder. "Are you not aware that a monk's work is fire," the elder said to him, "and that it burns wherever it goes? It benefits him more to give alms from the fruit of his labor, to receive prayer from the holy ones, and to be blessed in this way."

15. An elder was living a communal life with a brother. N 281
The elder was compassionate; when there was a famine, some people began coming to his door to receive charity. For his part the elder provided some bread for everybody who came, but when the brother saw what was happening, he said to the elder, "Give me my share of the loaves, and you do whatever you like with your share." The elder divided the loaves and continued to give alms out of his share; many began running to the elder on hearing that he provided for all. Perceiving the elder's disposition, God blessed the loaves, and they did not run out.

When the brother had eaten up his own bread supply, he said to the elder, "Abba, since I have a few crumbs of bread left, take me back to live a communal life with

you." "I will do as you wish," said the elder, and once again they were living a communal life. When food was plentiful again, still those who were in need kept coming to receive charity. One day the brother came in and saw that the loaves had run out. A poor man arrived, and the elder said to give him some bread, but [the brother] said, "There is no more, Father." "Go in and search," the elder said to him. The brother went in, looked around, and found the pantry full of loaves, at the sight of which he was terrified. He took some [of the bread] and gave it to the poor man. Perceiving the faith and the virtue of the elder, he glorified God.

N 282

16. One of the elders said, "There can be a person frequently employed in many good works whom the evil one causes to quibble over insignificant things in order to make him lose the reward for all the good things he achieves. Once when I was staying at Oxyrrynchos with a priest who was a great giver of alms, a widow came asking him for a little grain. 'Go, get a cloth [bag], and I will measure it out to you,' he said to her. When she brought it, he felt the cloth with his hand, saying, 'This is a big one!'—which put the widow to shame. When the widow had left, I said to him, 'Did you sell the grain to the widow, Abba?' 'No,' he said; 'I gave her charity.' Then I said, 'So, if you have given it to her entirely as charity, why did you quibble so minutely and put her to shame?'"

John Colobos 40

17. They used to tell of a young woman that her parents died, leaving her an orphan, so she thought to herself that she would turn her own home into a hostel for the fathers of Scete. She stayed there as guest-mistress, caring for the fathers for some considerable time. After a while, she exhausted her resources and began to be in need. Some perverted people attached themselves to her and diverted her from her excellent intention, so then she began leading a disorderly life, going even so far as to prostitute herself.

The fathers heard of this and were deeply saddened. Appealing to Abba John Colobos, they said, "We have heard concerning that sister that she is leading a disorderly life. She displayed her charity to us when she was able to do so; let us too now display charity to her and help her. Take the trouble to go to her and restore her according to the wisdom that God has given you." So Abba John went to her [place] and said to the doorkeeper, "Announce me to your mistress," but she sent him off, saying, "You [people] consumed her substance at first, and now look, she is poor." The *abba* said to her, "Tell her I can be very beneficial to her," but grinning, her servants said to him, "So what do you want to give her since you wish to meet her?"

But the doorkeeper went up and told her about him, and the young woman said to her, "Those monks are always going up and down the Red Sea, and they find pearls." She decked herself out and said to her, "Call him [up]." When he came, she had installed herself on the couch in anticipation. Coming close to her and looking into her face, Abba John said to her, "What have you got against Jesus that you have come to this?" She froze up on hearing this, and bowing his head, the elder began to weep bitterly, so she said to him, "Abba, why are you weeping?" Raising his head, he bent over again, weeping and saying, "I see Satan laughing in your face; am I not to weep?" She froze up even more on hearing this and said to him, "Is there repentance, Abba?" "Yes, there is," he said to her, and she said to him, "Take me wherever you like." "Let us go," he said to her; she got up and followed him.

Abba John noted that she gave no instructions nor said anything about her house, and he was amazed. It was late when they arrived at the desert. Making something like a small pillow of sand for her, he made the sign of the cross and said to her, "Sleep here." He made one for himself a little distance away, offered the customary

prayers, and lay down. Waking around midnight, he saw something like a path of light fixed from heaven to her, and he beheld the angels of God taking up her soul. Getting up, he went and nudged her with his foot. Seeing that she had died, he flung himself facedown beseeching God, and he heard a voice saying, "Her one hour of repentance has been accepted before the repentance of many who take their time and do not demonstrate the work of such repentance."

Timothy 1

18. Abba Timothy the priest said to Abba Poemen, "There is a woman in Egypt who plays the harlot and gives her earnings away as alms." In response the elder said, "She will not go on being a harlot, for the fruit of faith is apparent in her." Now it happened that the mother of Timothy the priest came to visit him, and he asked his mother, "That woman, did she go on playing the harlot?" "She has even increased [the number of] her lovers," she told him, "but she has also increased her almsgiving." Abba Timothy went to Abba Poemen and reported this to him, but he said, "She will not go on playing the harlot." Then the mother of Abba Timothy came again and said to him, "Do you know that that woman, the harlot, sought to come out with me so you might pray for her, but I did not agree to it?" On hearing this, he reported it to Abba Poemen, and Abba Poemen said to him, "Then rather do you go and meet her." Abba Timothy did go; he met her, and she wept copiously when she saw him and heard the Word of God from him, sorrowing for her sins. "I am quitting harlotry from now on," she said to him. "I am going to devote myself to fear of God." She immediately went and entered a monastery for women and was mightily well pleasing to God.

Sarah 7

19. Amma Sarah said, "It is good to give alms. If a person does it to please people at first, he will come from pleasing people to fearing God."

14

Obedience

1. Abba Antony said, "Obedience with continence subdues wild beasts." Antony 36

2. The blessed Arsenius once said to Abba Alexander, "Come and eat with me when you have cut your palm fronds, but if there come some guests, eat with them." But Abba Alexander used to work evenly and moderately; when the time came, he still had palm fronds. Wishing to fulfil the elder's instruction, he stayed to complete the palms. When Abba Arsenius saw that he was late, he ate, thinking that he had guests, but Abba Alexander went [to him] when he had finished the palm fronds in the evening, and the elder said to him, "You have guests?" and he said, "No." "So why did you not come?" [the elder] said to him. "Because you said to me, 'When you have cut your palm fronds, come then,'" he said, "and, observing your instruction, I did not come until I completed [the task] just now." The elder was amazed at his scrupulosity, and he said to him, "Break your fast quickly so you can perform your *synaxis* and partake of your water, otherwise your body will soon sicken." Arsenius 24

3. Abba Abraham went to see Abba Ares, and as they were sitting, another brother also came to the elder and said to him, "Tell me what to do so I may be saved." The elder said to him, "Go and spend this year eating bread and salt in the evening, then come back again and I will speak to you," and he went and did so. When the year was complete, the brother came back to Abba Ares, and Abraham happened to be there again. Again the elder Ares 1

said to the brother, "Go and fast every second day of this year." When the brother left, Abba Abraham said to Abba Ares, "Why do you speak to all the brothers with an easy yoke and lay heavy burdens on this brother?" The elder said, "The brothers go back in the same way they come seeking; but this one comes in the name of God to hear [the] Word, for he is a worker and diligently performs whatever I say to him. For that reason I speak the Word of God to him."

John Colobos 1

4. They used to say of Abba John Colobos that having taken refuge with an elder from Thebes at Scete, he was living in the desert. His *abba* took some dry wood, planted it, and said to him, "Irrigate it every day with a bottle of water until it bears fruit." Water was a long way from them, so one had to go in the evening and return at dawn. After three years [the wood] bore fruit. Taking the fruit, his elder brought it to the church, saying to the brothers, "Take and eat the fruit of obedience."

John the disciple of Paul 1

5. They used to say of Abba John the disciple of Abba Paul that he was highly obedient. Somewhere there was a tomb with a vicious hyena living in it. The elder saw that there were turds in that place; he told John to go and bring them, but he said to him, "And what am I to do about the hyena, Abba?" Teasing him, the elder said, "If it comes at you, tie it up and bring it here." So the brother went there in the evening, and here the hyena came at him. Following the elder's instruction, he lunged to grab it, but the hyena ran away. Giving chase, he said, "Hold on—my Abba told me to tie you up," and grabbing it, he tied it up. But the elder was worried; he sat there waiting for him, and here he came—bringing the hyena, tied up. The elder was amazed at the sight. Intending to humble him, he struck him, saying, "Madman, have you brought me a mad dog here?" The elder loosed it and let it go.

6. Abba Moses said to a brother, "Let us acquire obedience, which begets humility and brings endurance,

long-suffering, grief for sin, brotherly love, and charity, for these are our weapons of war."

7. He also said, "Come, brother, toward obedience of the truth, where there is humility, where there is strength, where there is joy, where there is endurance, where there is brotherly love, where there is long-suffering, where there is grief for sin, where there is charity; for he who has charity has fulfilled all the commandments of God."

8. He also said, "A fasting monk under [the authority of] a spiritual father without having obedience and humility—such a [monk] will not acquire any virtue, nor does he know what a monk is." Abba Moses

9. Again he said, "Obedience begets obedience; if someone obeys God, God listens to him." Mios 1

10. They used to say of Abba Megethios that, eating every second day, he would consume one loaf. Encountering Abba Sisoēs and Abba Poemen, he asked them about this. They said to him, "If you will listen to us, son, eat half the loaf each day," and when he did so, he experienced repose. Megethios 2b

11. They used to say about Abba Silvanus that, at Scete, he had a disciple called Mark, a man of enormous obedience and a calligrapher too; the elder loved him for his obedience. He had eleven other disciples, and it hurt them that he loved [Mark] more than them. The elders heard of it and were sad. The elders came to him one day, and taking them along, he went out and knocked at each cell, saying, "Brother so-and-so, come, for I need you," and not one of them followed him right away. Coming to Mark's cell, the elder knocked, saying, "Mark!" and on hearing the elder's voice, he immediately came out in haste, and [Silvanus] sent him on an errand. And he said to the elders, "Where are the other brothers, fathers?" Going into [Mark's] cell, he took up his quarto and found that he had begun an Ω but, hearing Mark the disciple of Silvanus 1

the elder's voice, he did not turn the pen to finish it. So the elders said, "We indeed love him whom you love, Abba, because God loves him too."

Mark the disciple of Silvanus 3

12. Once the mother of this brother Mark went down to see him and came in great style. The elder went out to her, but she said to him, "Abba, tell my son to come out so I can see him." The elder went in and said to him, "Come out, come out so your mother can see you." He was wearing tatters and was blackened from the cookhouse. Coming out in obedience, he closed his eyes and said to them, "Good health, good health!" but he did not see them, nor did his mother recognize that it was he. So again she sent to the elder, saying, "Abba, send my son [out] so I can see him," and he said to Mark, "Did I not tell you to go out so your mother could see you?" "I went out in accordance with your order, Abba," he said, "but please do not tell me to go out once again—so I do not disobey you." The elder went out and said to her, "It was he who met you and said, 'Good health,'" and the elder courteously dismissed her.

Poemen 109

13. There was a very devout worldling, and he came to Abba Poemen; there also came many other brothers asking to hear the elder say something. Abba Poemen said to the worldling, "Say something to the brothers." "What have I to say, wretch that I am?" said he, but in the face of great insistence he said, "I do not know anything, but I heard a parable from a great elder. Somebody once begged his friend, saying, 'Since I have a desire to see the king, take me to him.' The other said to him, 'I will come halfway with you.' To another friend he said, 'Take me to the king,' but he said to him, 'I will come with you as far as the palace.' He spoke to [yet] another friend, who said, 'I will usher you in with confidence and speak on your behalf.'" "Explain the parable to us," they said to him, and he said, "The first is asceticism, which leads you halfway; the second is

purity, which gets as far as heaven; the third is obedience, which brings you confidently before God."

Pambo 3

14. Four [monks] from Scete dressed in skins once came visiting the blessed Abba Pambo, and they each made known the virtue of another in his absence. The first one fasted a great deal; the second was indifferent to possessions; the third was very charitable. Of the fourth one they told him that he had been under the authority of an elder for twenty-two years. "I tell you that obedience is greater than the virtue of you all," Abba Pambo replied to them, "for each one of you has obtained whatever virtue he possesses by his own will, while he, suspending his own will, does the will of somebody else. Such persons are confessors if they hold fast to the end."

Sisōēs 10

15. Somebody came to Abba Sisōēs the Theban wanting to become a monk, and the elder asked him if he had anything in the world. "I have one son," he said, but the elder said to him, "Go and throw him in the river; then you will become a monk." After he set out to throw [his son into the river], the elder sent [someone] to prevent him. And when he was about to throw [his son into the river], the brother said to him, "The elder said again *not* to throw him," and leaving [his son], he came to the elder and became an excellent monk on account of his obedience.

Sōpatros 1

16. A brother asked Abba Sōpatros, "Give me a commandment, Abba, and I will keep it." "Let no woman enter your cell," he said, "do not read apocryphal writings, and engage in no discussions concerning the image,[1] for this is not heresy but hair splitting and quibbling on both parts. No creature is capable of comprehending this matter."

[1] This probably refers to christological disputes.

Synklētikē 16

17. The blessed Synklētikē said, "When we are living in community, let us rank obedience above *askēsis*, for [*askēsis*] teaches disdain, while [obedience] displays humble-mindedness."

see Synklētikē 17

18. Again she said, "We must govern the soul with discretion while living in community; [we must] not seek our own [interests] nor serve our personal opinion but obey [our] father in the faith. We have delivered ourselves into exile, meaning we have become exterior to worldly concerns. Let us not search for the things of the very place from which we have been excluded. We used to have glory there; here [we have] reproach; there, voracity for food; here, a scarcity even of bread."

Hyperechios 8

19. Abba Hyperechios said, "Obedience is the monk's jewel. He who possesses it will himself be heard and will stand with confidence before the Crucified One, for the Lord was obedient unto death on the cross" [see Phil 2:8].

N 290a

20. The fathers used to say that if somebody had confidence in a person and gave himself in subjection to him, he need no longer heed the commandments of God but surrender his will to his father, and God will not reproach him for it.

N 388

21. The elders used to say, "This is what God requires of Christians: that one listen attentively to the Scriptures and put into practice what is read; that one obey orthodox leaders and fathers."

22. A brother treated scornfully by somebody went to an elder at The Cells and said to him, "I am afflicted, Father." "Why is that?" the elder said to him, and he said to him, "A brother treated me scornfully, and the demon is pushing me into getting back at him." The elder said to him, "Listen to me, my son, and God will deliver you from this passion." The brother was agreeable to this, and the elder said to him, "Go to your cell and practice

hēsychia, fervently beseeching God on behalf of the brother who distressed you." Off he went and did as the elder told him, and within a week God wiped out the anger from him on account of the violence with which he coerced himself [see Matt 11:12] and of his obedience to the elder.

23. As a brother of Scete was setting out to work at the harvest, he visited a great elder and said to him, "Abba, tell me what I should do; should I go to the harvest?" "Will you do as I say if I tell you?" he asked, to which the brother replied, "I will listen to you." "If you will take my advice," said the elder to him, "get up and discharge yourself from working at this harvest, then come and I shall tell you what you are to do." The brother went away and resigned from the harvest, then he came to the elder, who said to him, "Go into your cell; pass the next fifty days eating bread with salt once a day, then I will give you something else to do." He went off and did as he was bidden, then he returned to the elder. He, aware that the brother was a worker, explained to him how he was to live in his cell. Off the brother went, back to his cell where he flung himself facedown on the ground, weeping before God for three days and three nights. After that, when the *logismoi* came saying, "You were raised up and have become a great one," he would call to mind his own shortcomings, saying, "And where are all the things I have left undone?" And if [the *logismoi*] also said to him, "You have many times offended by lack of attention," for his part he would say, "But I offer acts of worship[2] to God, and I do believe that he will deal mercifully with me." The defeated spirits appeared to him in visible form, saying, "You have floored us!" "How so?" he asked. "If we raise you up, you take N 291

[2] Liturgies [*leitourgeias*] could mean *synaxeis* or serviceable deeds.

refuge in humility," they replied, "and if we humiliate you, you rise up on high."

N 292 = N 290b

24. The elders used to say that there is nothing God requires of those starting out in the monastic life so much as the vexation of obedience.

N 293

25. There was an elder, an anchorite, who had an attendant living in a village. On one occasion the attendant was late in paying his usual visit; the elder ran out of provisions and of what he needed to do the handwork that occupied him in his cell. He was exasperated by his lack of anything to work at and of what he needed to feed himself. He said to his disciple, "Would you go into the village and summon the attendant?" "I will do as you wish," he replied, but the elder hesitated, not daring to send the brother. When they had waited a long time in exasperation and the attendant still did not arrive, again he said to the brother, "Would you go as far as the village?" "I will do as you wish," came the reply, but the brother was afraid to approach the village in case of scandal. Nevertheless, to avoid disobeying the father, he agreed to go. "Go," the elder said to him. "I have faith in the God of my fathers that he will protect you from every temptation." He offered a prayer and sent him on his way.

When the brother came into the village, he inquired where the attendant lived and found it. Now it so happened that the man and his entire household were out of the village attending a memorial service—all except one daughter of his. It was she who heard when the brother knocked at the door. When the brother asked about her father, she opened the door and invited him to step inside. She would have drawn him in, but he refused. She continued her blandishments and, at length, prevailed, drawing him toward herself. But he, perceiving that he was being hauled into indecency and confounded by his feelings, cried out to God with a sigh, "Lord, save me in

this hour by the prayers of my father." Having said this, he suddenly found himself by the river on his way back to the monastery; he was restored to his *abba* unharmed.

26. An elder said, "The Savior had affliction and austerity as the foundation of his teachings, so he who flees the foundation has fled the knowledge of God. Just as letters are given to children as the foundation of education so they can acquire learning, so too a monk who maintains obedience through toil and affliction becomes a coheir with Christ and a son of God." N 698

27. Two blood brothers went to live in a monastery; one of them was ascetic, the other exceedingly obedient. When the father said to this [latter] one, "Do this," he would do it, or "Do that," he would do it. [If he told him], "Eat at an early hour," he ate [early]; indeed, he was famous for his obedience. N 294

Now this was a source of irritation to the ascetic brother. He said to himself, "I will put him to the test to see whether he really does have obedience." He went to the *higoumen* saying, "Send my brother with me to visit somewhere," and the *abba* sent him off. Taking his brother with him, the ascetic brother came to a river in which there were many crocodiles. Wishing to try his brother, he said to him, "Go down into the river and cross it," which the other did. The crocodiles came and licked his body but did him no harm. When he saw him [unharmed], the ascetic brother told him, "Come up out of the river."

As they were travelling along, they encountered a corpse lying by the wayside. The ascetic said, "If we had an old garment, we could throw it over him." The obedient one said, "Let us rather pray, and maybe he will revive." So they stood in prayer, and while they were praying, the dead man revived. "It was on account of my asceticism that the corpse revived," the ascetic brother boasted, but God revealed everything to the father of the

monastery: how [the ascetic] had put his brother to the ordeal of the crocodiles and how the corpse had revived.

When they came to the monastery, the *abba* said to the ascetic, "Why did you treat your brother like that, putting him to the test? It was due to his obedience that the dead man revived."

N 295

28. Another person living in the world and having three children retired into a monastery, leaving them in the city. When he had been in the monastery for three years, his *logismoi* began bringing the remembrance of his children to him, and he grieved bitterly on their account (for he had not told the *abba* that he had children). Realizing that he was depressed, the *abba* said to him, "Why are you depressed?" "Father, I have three children in the city," he said, "and I wanted to bring them to the monastery." This the *abba* permitted him to do; when he came to the city, he found that two of them had died and only one was still alive. This one he took and brought to the monastery, where he looked for the father but could not find him. "Where is the father?" he said to the brothers. "He went off toward the bakery," they replied, whereupon he took the son and went to the bakery. The father embraced him when he saw him arriving; he took the child up in his arms, hugged him, and kissed him. "Do you love him?" he asked the child's father. "Yes," he replied. Then the father asked him again, "Do you love the child a great deal?" "Yes," he replied, and on hearing the reply, the *abba* said to him, "Take him and throw him into the furnace to be burned," and the father took the child and threw him into the furnace to be burned; but the furnace became immediately like the morning dew, and in those days [the father] was esteemed like the patriarch Abraham [see Gen 22:14].

N 296; Rufus 2

29. An elder said that one who lives in obedience to a spiritual father receives a greater reward than one who retires alone into the desert, adding that one of the fa-

thers recounted this, "I saw four orders in heaven. The first order: an ailing man giving thanks to God. The second order: one who practices hospitality and is available to be of service. The third order: a man who travels the desert, seeing nobody. The fourth order: a person living in obedience to a father, in subjection to him for the Lord's sake. The one maintaining his obedience was wearing a crown of gold and a breastplate, and he enjoyed greater distinction than the others. And I," he said, "asked my guide, 'How is it that the one who is smaller than the others has greater distinction?' In answer he said to me, 'Whereas the one who practices hospitality does so of his free own will, likewise the one in the desert has retired there of his own free will, [but] he who is obedient has totally abandoned his own wishes and depends on God and on his own father; it is for this reason that he enjoys greater distinction than the others.'" Therefore, my sons, obedience practiced for the sake of the Lord is a beautiful thing. You have heard some sketchy evidence of this admirable practice, my sons.

Oh obedience! Salvation of all the faithful!
Oh obedience! Begetter of all the virtues!
Oh obedience! Discoverer of the kingdom!
Oh obedience! That opens the heavens
and draws man up from earth!
Oh obedience! Cohabitant of the angels!
Oh obedience! Nourisher of all the saints!
For it was truly by you that they were sustained
and by you that they were made perfect.

30. A brother tempted by the idea of living alone announced it to Abba Heracleides. That [father], to fortify him, said to him, "There was an elder who had an obedient disciple for many years; then one day, tempted by the idea, he prostrated himself before the elder, saying, Heracleides 1

'Make me become a monk,' and the elder said to him, 'Look for a place; we will build you a cell, and you shall become a monk.' So he went and found [a place] one mile away, and they made the cell. So the elder said to the brother, 'Whatever I say to you, do it. Eat when you are hungry, drink, and sleep, only do not come out of your cell until Saturday, and then come to where I am,' and the elder returned to his own cell. The brother passed two days according to the elder's instruction, and on the third day, falling into *accidie*, he said, 'Why did the elder say this to me, not to offer prayers?' And he got up and sang several psalms, and after sundown he ate, then got up and went to get some sleep, and he saw a burnt-faced one lying on his sleeping mat, gnashing his teeth at him. In great fear he came running to elder and knocked at the door, saying, 'Take pity on me, Abba, and open the door quickly.' But the elder, knowing that he had not obeyed his instruction, did not open up to him until dawn. When he did open at dawn, he found [the brother] pleading; taking pity on him, he brought him in. Then he said to the elder, 'I beg of you, father—I saw a black burnt-faced one on my sleeping mat when I went to get some sleep.' The elder said to him, 'This happened to you because you did not keep my commandment,' then, forming him according to his ability in the procedure of the solitary life, he dismissed him, and, little by little, he became an excellent monk.

N 23a 31. A domestic slave who became a monk lived for forty-five years content with salt, bread, and water. Touched by this, his master withdrew [from the world] after a certain time, and he became the disciple of his own slave, [serving him] in great obedience.

N 46 32. An elder told the story of a pious lawyer of Antioch who often went to a recluse begging to be taken in and to be made a monk, but the elder said to him, "If you wish me to take you in, 'go sell all that you possess and

give [the proceeds] to the poor' [Matt 19:21] according to the Lord's command, then I will receive you." Off he went and did as he was instructed. After that, the elder said to him, "There is another commandment you must observe: you shall not speak." He agreed to this, and for five years he did not speak. There were those who began praising him, so his *abba* said to him, "It is not good for you to be here; I am sending you to a *coenobion* in Egypt," and he sent him there. But he sent him without telling him he could now speak; hence the man, observing the commandment, continued not speaking. Now the *abba* who had taken him in wanted to know whether or not he really could speak, so to test him, he sent him on a mission when the river was in flood. This was to see whether, in his distress, he would say, "I could not cross the river." The *abba* sent a brother after him to see what he would do. Well, when he came to the river, which he could not cross, he knelt down, and here there came a crocodile that took him, carrying him over to the other side. When the brother sent after him observed this, off he went and reported it to the *abba* and to the brothers, who were flabbergasted. In the course of time, this brother [from Antioch] died; the [Egyptian] *abba* told the [Antiochene] *abba* who had sent him [into Egypt], "Even though you sent us a dumb man, he was an angel of God." Then the recluse sent word, "He was not dumb; he could speak perfectly well, but he remained like that in obedience to the commandment that I originally imposed on him." They were all amazed, and they glorified God.

15

Humility

Antony 2

1. Contemplating the depths of God's judgments, Abba Antony inquired, "Lord, how is it that some die after a short life, while others grow very old? Why are some in penury and others affluent? How is it that the wicked become affluent, while the righteous are in penury?" A voice came to him that said, "Antony, look to yourself, for these are the judgments of God, and it is not appropriate for you to learn about them."

Antony 4

2. Abba Antony said to Abba Poemen, "This is the great task of a person: to take responsibility upon himself for his own shortcomings in the presence of God and to expect temptation until his ultimate breath."

Antony 7

3. Abba Antony said, "'I have seen all the snares of the devil set out on earth. Who can pass though these?' I said with a sigh; and I heard a voice that said, 'Humble-mindedness.'"

Antony 17

4. Some elders once visited Abba Antony, and with them was Abba Joseph. The elder cited a saying from the Scripture, wishing to put them to the test. Starting with the youngest of them, he began asking what this saying [might mean], and each one began to speak according to his own ability. But the elder said to each one, "You did not find [it]." Later on he said to Abba Joseph, "You then, what do you say this verse means?" In reply he said, "I do not know." Said Abba Antony, "Abba Joseph indeed found the way when he said, 'I do not know.'"

5. The demons once set upon Abba Arsenios in his cell and afflicted him. When the persons who attended to him came, as they stood outside the cell, they could hear him crying out to God, saying, "O God, do not abandon me! I have done no good thing in your sight, but, of your kindness, give me [the chance] to make a fresh start." Arsenios 3

6. They used to say of him that whereas nobody of the palace used to wear finer clothing than him when he was in the palace, so nobody wore more shabby [clothing] than he did in church. Arsenios 4

7. Abba Arsenios was once asking an Egyptian elder about his own *logismoi*. Another person, when he saw him, said, "Abba Aresnius, how is it that you, who have such a command of Greek and Roman learning, are asking this peasant about your *logismoi*?" But he said to him, "A command of Greek and Roman learning I have, but I have not yet learned the alphabet of this peasant." Arsenios 6

8. The elders used to say that a few dried figs were once given to Scete. As these were of no account, they did not send [any] to Abba Arsenios so that he would not be insulted. But when the elder heard, he would not come out for the *synaxis*, saying, "You have excluded me by not giving me [a share of] a donation that God sent for the brothers, a donation I was not worthy to receive." When they heard [this], they were edified by the humility of the elder. The priest went and brought him the figs, and then they brought him to the *synaxis* with joy. Arsenios 16

9. It used to be said of him that nobody could comprehend the manner of his way of life. Arsenios S1; N 15

10. Once when the same Abba Arsenios was living in the lower regions and was disturbed there, it seemed good for him to leave his cell. Taking nothing out of it, he went like that to his own disciples, the Pharanites Alexander and Zoïlos. He said to Alexander, "Get up and sail away," which he did. To Zoïlos he said, "Come Arsenios 32, 40, 41b

with me as far as the river, and we will search for a vessel sailing to Alexandria, and, in that way, do you too sail off to your brother." Zoïlos was troubled at the instruction, but he kept silent, and in that way they were separated from each other.

Coming into the environs of Alexandria, the elder [Arsenius] became seriously ill. His attendants said to each other, "Perhaps one of us grieved the elder and that was why he separated himself from us?" but they found nothing [offensive] among themselves, not even that they had ever disobeyed him.

When the elder recovered, he said, "I am going to my fathers," and so saying, he sailed off and came to Petra where his attendants were. Close to the river a black serving wench came and touched his sheepskin, but the elder reprimanded her, so the wench said to him, "If you are a monk, get to the mountain." Conscience stricken by the remark, the elder said to himself, "Arsenius, if you are a monk, get to the mountain," and forthwith Alexander and Zoïlos met him there. They threw themselves at his feet; the elder threw himself down too, and both parties wept.

The elder said to them, "Did you not hear that I was ill?" "Yes," they said, and the elder said, "Then why did you not come and see me?" Abba Alexander said to him, "Because your separation from us did not take place peaceably, and many were not edified, saying, 'If they had not disobeyed the elder, he would not have separated from them.'" He said to them, "I too knew that. Now people are going to say that the dove did not find a resting place for her feet, so she returned to Noah in the ark" [see Gen 8:9]. In this way they were reassured, and they stayed with him until his death.

When he was about to die, his disciples were distraught, and he said to them, "The hour is not yet come; I will tell you when it comes, but I will be judged together with you at the judgment seat of Christ if you give my

remains to anybody." They said to him, "What shall we do then, for we do not know how to bury [them]?" and the elder said, "Do you know how to fasten a rope to my foot and drag me to the mountain?" When he was about to give up the ghost, the brothers saw him weeping, and they said to him, "Are you too really afraid, father?" He said to them, "Truly, the fear that is with me in this hour has been with me ever since I became a monk," and so he fell asleep.

This is the saying of the elder: "Arsenios, why did you come out?" and: "I often repented after speaking, but never when I kept silent."

When Abba Poemen heard that Abba Arsenios had fallen asleep, he wept and said, "Blessed are you, Abba Arsenius, because you wept for yourself here in this present world; for he who does not weep for himself here will weep there eternally. Whether it be willingly here or unwillingly there, it is impossible not to weep on account of the torments."

Arsenios 42

11. Concerning the same Abba Arsenios, Abba Daniel recounted that he never wanted to comment on an inquiry about Scripture, even though he was capable of commenting if he wanted to, nor would he readily write a letter. When he came to church from time to time, he would place himself behind a pillar so nobody would see his face; he did not heed another person. His appearance was angelic, like Jacob's, the hair completely white, the body noble but slender, the beard large, down to the belly. His eyelashes hung down from weeping. He was tall but bent over with age, and he died at the age of ninety-five. He spent forty years in the palace of Theodosius the Great of blessed memory, being father to the most godly Arcadius and Honorius. He spent forty years at Scete; ten at Trōē above Babylon, across from Memphis; three at Canopus, Alexandria; then for the other two years he came back to Trōē again and fell

asleep there, completing his course in peace and godly fear, "for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" [Acts 11:24].

Anoub 1

12. Abba John recounted how Abba Anoub and Abba Poemen and the rest of his brothers came to a place called Terenouthis until they should perceive where they ought to be staying. They stayed there a few days in an old temple. Abba Anoub said to Abba Poemen, "Of your charity, do you and each of your brothers remain apart in *hēsychia*, and let us not meet with each other during this week." Abba Poemen said to him, "We will do as you wish," and so they did.

Now there was a stone statue there in the temple; Abba Anoub would get up early in the morning and throw stones at the face of the statue; in the evening he would say to it, "Forgive me," and he spent the whole week behaving like that. On Saturday they met up with each other, and Abba Poemen said to Abba Anoub, "I saw you throwing stones at the face of the statue during the whole week, Abba, then making an apology to it too. Does a man of faith act like that?" "I did this deed on your account," the elder replied. "When you saw me stoning the face of the statue, was it angry, or did it speak?" "No," said Abba Poemen. "And then again, when I prostrated myself to it, was it troubled, and did it say, 'I do not forgive you'?" "No" said Abba Poemen. Abba Anoub said, "And here we are, seven brothers. If you want us to live with each other, let us become like this statue that is not troubled even if it is insulted. If you do not want to become like that, here there are four gates in this temple; let each one go where he will." But they threw themselves to the ground saying to Abba Anoub, "We will do as you wish, father, and attend to what you say to us."

Abba Poemen said, "We stayed together all the time, working in accord with the instruction the elder spoke to us. He appointed one of us to be steward; we would

eat whatever he set before us, and it was impossible for any one of us to say, 'Bring something else,' or to say, 'I don't want to eat this.' We passed our entire time in repose and peace."

Ammonas 9

13. They used to say of Abba Ammonas that some folk came to plead their case in his presence, but the elder feigned insanity when he heard. Then there was a woman there who said to her neighbour, "This elder is crazy." The elder heard her; he called out to her and said, "How great were the labors I carried out in the desert to acquire this craziness! And am I to lose it today for your sake?"

Apphy 1

14. They recounted of a bishop of Oxyrrynchos named Apphy that he endured much hardship when he was a monk, and when he became bishop he wanted to practice the same hardship in the world, but he lacked the strength. He cast himself down in the presence of God, saying, "Did your grace depart from me because of the bishopric?" It was revealed to him that it was not so, "but then it was the desert, and as there was nobody there, God took care of you. But now it is the world, and folk are taking care of you."

Daniel 3

15. Abba Daniel said that there was a daughter of a leading citizen in Babylon possessed of a demon. Her father had a monk whom he cherished, and that one said to him, "No one can cure your daughter except some anchorites I know. If you entreat them, they will not agree to do this out of humility. But let us do this: when they come to market, pretend you want to buy something from them. When they come to get the price of the wares, we will tell them to offer a prayer, and I believe she will be healed."

They went out into the marketplace and found a disciple of the elders sitting there to sell their wares. They took him together with the baskets as the one who ought to receive the payment. When the monk came into

the house, the woman possessed of a demon came and gave the monk a slap, but he turned the other cheek, according to the commandment [Matt 5:39]. Tortured [by this], the demon cried out, "What violence! The commandment of Jesus is casting me out!" The demon came out immediately, and the maiden was purged. When the elders came, they told them what had happened; they glorified God and said, "It is usual for the arrogance of the devil to fall before the humility of Christ."

16. An elder said, "To blame oneself is the beginning of salvation."

Carion 1

17. Abba Carion said, "I have performed many more physical tasks than my son Zachariah, but I have not attained to his stature in humility and silence."

Zachariah 4

18. A vision came to Abba Zachariah once when he was staying at Scete, and he reported it to Abba Carion; but he, being a man of action, really knew nothing of such things. He beat him, saying [the vision] was of the demons. But the *logismos* endured; so he went to Abba Poemen by night and told him all—and how it was burning within him. The elder perceived that it was from God; he sent him to a certain elder, saying to him, "Do whatever he tells you." He went, and before he made any inquiry, the elder anticipated him and told him all. "The vision is from God," he said, "but go and be subject to your father."

Zachariah 3

19. Abba Moses said to Abba Zachariah, "Tell me what I am to do." He threw himself on the ground at the other's feet when he heard this, saying, "You are asking me, Father?" The elder said to him, "Believe me, Zachariah my son, I saw the Holy Spirit descending on you; therefore I am obliged to ask you." Then Zachariah took his own cowl from his head, put it beneath his feet, and trod on it, saying, "Unless he is crushed like that, a person cannot be a monk."

Zachariah 5

20. Abba Poemen said that Abba Moses asked Brother Zachariah when he was at the point of death, "What do you see?" and he said to him, "Is it not better to keep silent, Father?" "It is, my son; be silent," [the elder] said to him. At the moment of his death, Abba Isidore (who was sitting there) looked up to heaven and said, "Rejoice, rejoice, Zachariah my son, for the gates of the kingdom of heaven have been opened to you."

21–30 are from Isaiah of Scete, *Ascetic Discourses*

21. Abba Isaiah said, "Loving human glory brings forth falsehood, but to root it out in humility increases the fear of God in the heart; so do not seek to be friends with the celebrities of the world lest the edge of God's glory be blunted in you."

22. He also said, "If when you are doing your acts of worship[3] you do them in humble-mindedness as one who is unworthy, they are acceptable to God. But should there arise in your heart some proud thought and you consent to it, or if the recollection occurs to you of somebody else who is sleeping or inattentive and you pass judgment on someone, know that your labor is in vain."

23. On the subject of humble-mindedness he also said, "It has no tongue to declare anybody inattentive or to contradict one who is importuning, no eyes to see another's shortcoming or to take note of anybody, no ears to hear what is not beneficial to the soul. It has nothing to do with anything other than one's own sins; but it is peaceable with all people in accordance with the commandment of God and not because of some other attachment. Therefore, if anybody fasts six days a week and devotes himself to hard labor outside this pathway, all his toil is in vain."

24. He also said, "He who has acquired humble-mindedness acknowledges his own sins; for if sorrow

[3] See n. 2 on p. 239.

for sin is combined with humble-mindedness and both of them remain with him, they expel every demonic *logismos* from his soul, nourishing it with their own worth and with the holy virtues. For the one who has humble-mindedness and sorrow for sin does not care about men's reproach; these [two virtues] become his weapons, protecting him from wrath and retribution and teaching him to endure the slings and arrows. For what reproach or anger can come near to one who is sorrowing for his own sins in the presence of God?"

25. He also said, "Consciously to throw oneself down in the presence of God and to heed the commandments in humble-mindedness—these produce love, and love produces *apatheia*."

26. The same [elder] was asked, "What is humility?" and he said, "Humility is thinking that you are more sinful than all other folk and despising yourself as one who does no good thing in the sight of God. The works of humility are to keep silent; not to take stock of yourself in any way; not to be contentious; to be submissive with eyes cast down; to have death before your eyes; not to lie, to talk idly, to contradict your better, or to be unwilling that his word should stand; to endure insult; to hate repose; to exert oneself in all matters; to be on the watch; to excise one's own will; and neither to offend nor to be jealous of anybody."

27. He also said, "Be unnoticed to the best of your ability so you can devote yourself to weeping. To the best of your ability, take care not to contend about the faith or to be dogmatic, but follow the catholic church—for nobody can comprehend anything of the Godhead."

28. He also said, "He who possesses humble-mindedness lays on himself the blame due to his brother, saying, 'It was my fault.' For he who looks down on his brother has it that he is wise himself and never offended

anybody. He who is in fear of God is concerned about the virtues, that not one of them escape him."

29. He also said, "Let it not be your tongue but your deeds that speak. Let your speech be lowlier than your deeds. Do not speak without self-awareness. Do not teach without humility, so that the earth will receive your seed."

30. He also said, "It is not wisdom just to speak; wisdom is knowing the time when one must speak. Keep silent as a conscious endeavor and speak as a conscious endeavor. Take heed before speaking and reply appropriately. Appear ignorant where learning is concerned, to escape much toil, for he raises up toil for himself who shows himself off as learned; make no boast in your learning, for nobody knows anything. The end of all is to blame oneself, to be inferior to one's neighbor, and to cling to the Godhead."

Theophilus 1

31. The blessed Archbishop[4] Theophilus once visited the Mount of Nitria, and the *abba* of the Mount came to him. The archbishop said to him, "What did you find in this way [of life] that is extra, Father?" The elder said to him, "Always to accuse and blame oneself." The archbishop said to him, "There is indeed no other way but this one."

Theodore of Phermē 6

32. Abba Theodore happened to be with the brothers, and while they were devoutly eating, the brothers were taking cups in silence; but they were not saying, "Forgive." Abba Theodore commented, "The monks have lost their excellence, not saying, 'Forgive.'"

Theodore of Phermē 25

33. They used to say of the same Abba Theodore that when he was designated deacon at Scete, he was unwilling to accede to serving as a deacon and ran off to several places. The elders brought him back again, saying,

[4] Of Alexandria (385–412).

"Do not abandon your diaconate." Abba Theodore said to them, "Let me be, and I will beseech God to assure me whether I should stay in the post of my diaconate." As he besought God, he said, "O God, if it be your will that I stay in my liturgical function, assure me." There was shown to him a pillar of fire from earth to heaven; and there was a voice: "If you can be like this pillar, go and serve as a deacon." When he heard this, he resolved never to accede. When he came into church, the brothers prostrated themselves before him, saying, "If you do not want to be a deacon, at least hold the chalice," but he would not agree, saying, "If you do not release me [from that], I will move away from this place," and so they released him.

John Colobos S1

34. Abba John Colobos said, "The gate of God is humility, and it was by way of many insults that our fathers joyfully entered the city of God."

John Colobos 22

35. He also said, "Humble-mindedness and the fear of God are superior to all the virtues."

John of The Cells 2

36. John the Theban said, "Before all else, the monk ought to practice humble-mindedness, for it is the first commandment of the Savior, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'" [Matt 5:3].

Cronios 1

37. A brother asked Abba Isaac, "In what way does one arrive at humble-mindedness?" The elder said, "Through fear of God." The brother said, "And by what procedure does one arrive at fear of God?" The elder said, "In my opinion, let him withdraw himself from every affair and dedicate himself to physical toil to the best of his ability, bearing in mind his departure from the body and the judgment of God, and he should live in repose."

Copres 3

38. Some fathers of Scete were once assembled to discuss the question of Melchizedek [see 18.5]. They had forgotten to call Abba Copres. When they eventually did call him, they began asking him about [Melchizedek].

He struck himself in the face three times and said, "Woe to you, Copres, for you were leaving aside the things God commanded you to do and are inquiring into what he does not require of you." The brothers ran away to their cells on hearing this.

Macarius the Egyptian 1

39. Abba Macarius recounted this about himself: "As a young man, I was living in a cell in Egypt; they laid hands on me to make me a cleric at the village church. I fled elsewhere, not willing to accede [to the office]. A devout worldling came to me and began to take my handwork [to sell] and to attend to my needs. Now it happened that, through devilish temptation, a maiden fell [into sin] at the village. She became pregnant and was asked who it might be that had done this. 'The anchorite,' she said. The villagers came out and got me. They hung soot-blackened pots and handles of jars around my neck then paraded me around the streets of the village, hitting me and saying, 'This monk has defiled our maiden; get him, get him!' and they almost beat me to death. But one of the elders came and said to them, 'How long do you intend to go on beating the foreign monk?' The one who was attending to my needs was following, chagrined, for they were insulting him and saying, 'Here is the anchorite for whom you gave guarantees; what has he done?' The [maiden's] parents said, 'We are not letting him go until he binds himself to maintain her.' I spoke with my attendant, and he so bound me.

"I went to my cell and gave him all the baskets I had [made], saying, 'Sell them and give [the proceeds] to the woman so she can eat,' and I said to my *logismos*, 'Look, Macarius, you have found yourself a wife; it is necessary to work more in order to feed her.' I started working night and day and sending [money] to her. When the time came for the poor girl to give birth, she was in labor for many days without giving birth, and they said to her, 'What is going on?' 'I know,' she said, 'I slandered the anchorite and lied about him,

but he's not responsible [for my] trouble: it was young so-and-so.' The attendant came to me joyfully, saying, 'The maiden could not give birth until she confessed and said, "The anchorite is not responsible; I lied about him." Now look, all the village wants to come here and apologize to you.' When I heard that, I got up and fled here, to Scete, so folk would not harass me. That is the reason why I came here."

Macarius 11 40. Once when the same Abba Macarius was coming from the marsh to his cell carrying reeds, the devil met him on the way with a scythe; he wanted to strike him but could not. He said to him, "There is a great force [coming] from you, Macarius, for I cannot get at you. Look, whatever you do, I do it too. You fast; I do not eat at all. You keep watch; I do not ever sleep. There is only one thing in which you have the better of me." "What is that?" Abba Macarius said to him, and he said, "Only your humility; and because of that, I cannot get at you."

Matōēs 2 41. Abba Matōēs said, "The nearer a person gets to God, the more he sees himself as a sinner; for when the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord, he began to declare himself wretched and impure" [see Isa 6:5].

Matōēs 9 42. Abba Matōēs went from Raïthou to the district of Gabala. His brother was with him. The bishop took the elder and made him a priest. While they were eating together, the bishop said, "Forgive me, Abba. I know you did not want this thing, but I presumed to do it so I could be blessed by you." The elder humbly said to him, "Certainly my *logismos* had little wish for it; but what troubles me is that [now] I have to separate from my brother, for I cannot hold up to offer all the prayers." The bishop said to him, "If you know that he is worthy, I will ordain him too." Abba Matōēs said, "I do not know whether he is worthy, but I know one thing: he is better than me," and [the bishop] ordained him too. Both of them died never having approached the altar to

offer the Eucharist. The elder would say, "I have faith in God that soon I will not have much to answer for on account of the ordination, since I do not offer the Eucharist. Ordination is for the blameless."

43. They used to say of Abba Moses that when he became a cleric and they put the stole on him, the archbishop said to him, "Look, you have become all white, Abba Moses." The elder said to him, "Maybe outside, Lord Pope, but what about inside?" The bishop wanted to put him to the test, so he said to the clergy, "When Abba Moses comes into the sanctuary, chase him away and follow him to hear what he says." The elder came in; they denounced him and chased him off, saying, "Get out, you burnt-faced one!" Out he went, saying to himself, "They treated you rightly, ash-skinned black man; since you are not human, why do you go among humans?" Moses 4

44. Abba Moses said, "He who has humility humbles the demons; he who does not have humility is mocked by them." N 499

45. He also said, "Humble not only your speech but also your mind. It is impossible to excel in godly works without humble-mindedness."

46. When Abba Nestheros was living in a *coenobion*, Abba Poemen, hearing things about him, longed to see him and revealed this to his *abba* that he might send him. But he was reluctant to send him alone and did not send him. Nestheros the Coenobite 2

But a few days later, the steward of the *coenobion*, having a *logismos*, begged his *abba* to let him go to Abba Poemen, saying it was to acknowledge his own *logismoi* to him. He let him go, saying, "Take the brother with you too, for the elder spoke to me about him, but not being confident to let him go alone, I did not send him."

When they came to the elder, the steward spoke to him about his own *logismoi*, and he cured him. Then the elder questioned the brother, "Abba Nestheros, how did you come by this virtue of not speaking or intervening when a difficulty arose in the *coenobion*?"

After being subjected to considerable pressure on the part of the elder, the brother said, "Forgive me, Abba. When I first entered the *coenobion*, I said to my *logismos*, 'You and the ass are one; as the ass is beaten and does not speak, is reviled and does not answer back, so should you not [do], as the Psalmist says: 'I have become a beast of burden at your side, and I am always with you'" [Ps 72:22-23].

Mios 2 47. They used to say of Abba Olympius at Scete that he was a former slave and that he went to Alexandria each year bringing his earnings to his masters. They would meet him and prostrate themselves before him. The elder would put water in the bowl and bring it so he could wash his masters' feet, but they would say to him, "No, Father, you are embarrassing us." But he would say to them, "I am acknowledging that I am your slave, masters, and giving thanks that you set me free to be a slave for God. For my part, I wash your feet, and you receive my earnings." But they would strive not to accept [them], and he would say, "If you do not want to accept them, I am staying here, slaving for you." They were in awe of him, so they would let him do what he wanted to do. They would send him on his way with honor and many goods so he could distribute alms on their behalf. He became eminent at Scete on this account.

Poemen 49 48. Abba Poemen said, "A person is as much in need of humble-mindedness all the time and of the fear of God as he is of the breath that comes out of his mouth."

Poemen S4 49. Abba Poemen was asked by a brother, "How ought I to be in the place where I am living?" The elder said to him, "Think of yourself as a foreigner wherever you

are living so you do not advance your own opinion, and you will know repose."

50. He also said, "To prostrate oneself in the presence of God, not to measure oneself, and to cast away one's own will—these are the tools of the soul." Poemen 36

51. He also said, "Do not measure yourself, but attach yourself to someone who lives a good life." Poemen 73

52. A brother asked the same [elder], "To what ought I to direct my thoughts while remaining in my cell?" The elder told him, "For the time being, I am a man up to my neck in the depth of a slough, carrying a burden round my neck and crying to God, 'Have mercy on me.'"

53. He also said that a brother asked Abba Alōnios, "What is belittlement?" and the elder said, "To be below the beasts and to know that they are free from condemnation." Poemen 41

54. He also said that one day the elders were sitting down eating, and the same Abba Alōnios was in attendance to serve. They praised him when they noticed him, but he gave no response whatsoever. One of them said to him in private, "Why did you not respond to the elders when they praised you?" Abba Alōnios said to him, "Had I responded to them, I would have been found to be as one who had accepted praise." Poemen 55

55. An elder said, "The ground on which the Lord commanded [us] to offer sacrifices—that is humble-mindedness." N 688

56. He also said, "If a person maintains his rank, he is not disturbed." Poemen 167

57. Abba Joseph recounted, "While we were sitting with Abba Poemen, he named Agathon the *abba*, and I said to him, 'He is a younger person; why are you calling him *abba*?' Said Abba Poemen, 'Because his mouth has caused him to be called *abba*.'" Poemen 61

Poemen 105

58. They used to say about Abba Poemen that he never wanted to comment on the saying of another elder; he would rather praise it.

Theophilus 2

59. Abba Theophilus the archbishop once visited Scete. When the brothers were assembled, they said to Abba Pambo, "Utter one saying for the pope so he might reap benefit in this place." Said the elder to them, "If he reaps no benefit from my silence, neither will he benefit from my word."

Pistos 1

60. Brother Pistos related this: "Seven of us brothers went to Abba Sisoēs, who was living on the island of Clisma, begging him to utter a saying for us. 'Forgive me,' he said, 'for I am a simple fellow, but I paid a visit to Abba Ōr and also to Abba Athre. Abba Ōr had been sick for eighteen years. I prostrated myself before them [requesting them] to utter a saying. Abba Ōr said, "What shall I say to you? Go your way and do whatever you see. God is with him who exerts and coerces himself in all things."

"'Now Abba Ōr and Abba Athre were not from the same region, but there was great peace between them right until they departed from the body. The obedience of Abba Athre was great, and great was the humility of Abba Ōr. I spent a few days in close proximity with them and saw a great wonder that Abba Athre worked. Somebody brought them a small fish, and Abba Athre wanted to prepare it for Abba Ōr the elder. He had the knife and was cutting the fish when Abba Ōr called him, saying, "Athre, Athre!" Abba Athre left the knife in the middle of the fish and did not cut the rest of it but came to the elder. I wondered at his great obedience; why did he not say, "Wait until I cut the fish"? I said to Abba Athre, "How did you come by such obedience?" and he said, "It is not mine; it is the elder's," and he took me aside, saying, "Come and see his obedience."

"'He cooked the little fish, deliberately spoiling it, then presented it to the elder, who ate it without speak-

ing. [Abba Athre] said to him, "Is it good, elder?" and he answered, "It is very good." After that he brought him a little [fish] that really was good and said, "I spoiled it, elder," and he replied, "Yes, you did spoil it a little." Then Abba Athre said to me, "You have seen that the elder's is [true] obedience." I went away from them and did my best to maintain whatever I saw.'

"This is what Abba Sisoēs told the brothers. One of our number begged him, 'Be charitable with us, do you yourself utter one saying for us.' He said, 'He who is consciously aware of not being worth reckoning fulfills all the Scripture.' Another of our number said to him, 'What is alienation [*xeniteia*], Father?' but he said, 'Keep quiet and say, "I have nothing to do with any place, wherever I go"; that is alienation.'"

61. A brother asked Abba Sisoēs, "What is the road leading to humility?" Said the elder to him, "This is the road leading to humility: continence, praying to God, and struggling to be inferior to everybody." Tithoēs 7

62. A brother visited Abba Sisoēs at the mountain of Abba Antony, and while they were speaking, he said to Abba Sisoēs, "Have you not now attained the stature of Abba Antony, Father?" and the elder said, "How could I have attained the stature of the holy one? If I had one *logismos* of Abba Antony, I would become all on fire. Yet I do know a person who, with great effort, can carry his *logismos*." Sisoēs 9

63. The brother also asked him, "Was Satan in the habit of tempting those of old time?" Abba Sisoēs answered him, "More so now, for his time has drawn nigh and he is troubled." Sisoēs 11

64. Some others visited him to hear a saying from him, but he said nothing to them. Every time he would say, "Excuse me." Seeing his baskets, they said to Abraham his disciple, "Why are you making these baskets?" "We Sisoēs 16

sell them here and there," he said, and hearing this, the elder said, "Sisōēs eats from here and there." They derived much benefit on hearing this and joyfully went their way, edified by his humility.

Sisoēs 13 65. A brother questioned Abba Sisoēs, "I observe that in my own case my memory remains with God." The elder said, "It is no great thing for your *logismos* to be with God, but *this* is: to see oneself as inferior to all creation, for that and physical toil are conducive to humble-mindedness."

Synklētikē S9 66. The blessed Synklētikē said, "Just as a vessel cannot be built without nails, so is it impossible to be saved without humble-mindedness."

N 699 67. Abba Hyperechios said, "Humble-mindedness is a tree of life raised up on high."

Synklētikē 11 68. He also said, "Imitate the publican lest you be condemned with the Pharisee [see Luke 18:14], and choose the gentleness of Moses in order to transform your heart (which is flinty) into springs of water" [see Exod 17:6].

Ōrsisios 1 69. Abba Ōrsisios said, "Unbaked brick set in a foundation near to a river does not last one day, but it lasts like stone if it is baked. Likewise, a person with a carnal mentality and not purged by the fire of the word of God like Joseph [see Ps 104:19; LXX only] falls apart when he proceeds to govern. For there are many temptations for such people. A person aware of his own limitations does well to flee from the burden of authority; but they who are firm in the faith are immoveable. If one wants to speak of the holy Joseph himself, he will say that he was not earthly. How he was tempted, and in what a country when there was not a trace of godliness! But the God of his ancestors was with him and delivered him out of all affliction; and now he is with his ancestors in the kingdom of heaven. As for ourselves, knowing our own

limitations, let us fight the good fight, for in that way we are only just able to escape the judgment of God."

70. An elder who was an anchorite wandering in the desert said to himself, "You have practiced the virtues correctly," and he prayed to God, saying, "Lord, show me if I am falling behind in anything, and I will accomplish it." Wishing to humble his *logismos*, God said to him, "Go to such and such an archimandrite and do whatever he tells you to do." But God revealed to the archimandrite, "Look, so-and-so the anchorite is coming to you. Tell him to take a whip and go graze the pigs" [see Luke 15:15]. The elder came, knocked at the door, and went in to where the archimandrite was. They greeted each other and sat down. Said the anchorite, "Tell me what I am to do in order to be saved." He said, "Will you do whatever I tell you to do?" "Yes," he said to him, and [the archimandrite] said, "Take this whip and go graze pigs," so the anchorite went and grazed pigs. But when those who were used to hearing about him and seeing him beheld him grazing pigs, they said, "Look at the great anchorite of whom we heard; see, he is out of his mind and has a demon: he is grazing the pigs!" But when God saw his humility and how he endured folks' insults, he sent him back again to his place. N 132 E

71. A man in the possession of a demon, foaming at the mouth, once struck one of the elders, a monk who was a hermit, on the cheek, but the elder offered him the other cheek in exchange [see Matt 5:39]. The demon, unable to withstand the fiery nature of that humility, immediately abandoned the man. N 298

72. An elder said, "When a proud or conceited *logismos* overtakes you, search your conscience: whether you have kept all the commandments, whether you love your enemies and grieve over their setback, whether you regard yourself as an unprofitable servant [Luke 17:10], Ōr 11; N 299

more sinful than all. And do not ever think highly of yourself as having done all things well, for you know that such a *logismos* is the ruination of everything."

Ōr 13; N 331 73. An elder said, "Do not speak against your brother in your heart, saying, 'I am more vigilant and more ascetic,' but rather submit yourself to the grace of Christ in the spirit of poverty and unfeigned love, lest you fall into the spirit of boasting and lose your labor, for it is written, 'Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall'" [1 Cor 10:12].

Ōr 10; N 300 74. An elder said, "He who is honored and praised above his worth suffers great harm. But he who is not at all honored by men is glorified on high."

N 301 75. When a brother asked an elder, "Is it a good thing to make many prostrations?" The elder said to him, "We see in the case of Joshua the son of Nun that it was when he was lying facedown that God appeared to him."

N 302 76. An elder was asked, "Why are we so under attack by the demons like this?" and he said, "It is because we throw away our weapons: dishonor, humility, indifference to possessions, and patient endurance."

N 303 77. A brother said to an elder, "Abba, if someone brings me compliments [or: important people] from outside, do you want me to tell him not to bring them?" "No," said the elder. "Why not?" the brother said. "Because not even we [elders] could keep those [rules]," the elder said, "and for fear that we, while telling our neighbor not to do it, should ourselves later be discovered doing it." "What then must one do?" the brother said. The elder said, "If we want to keep silent, the practice [of it] will be sufficient for our neighbor."

N 304 78. An elder was asked, "What is humility?" He said, "It is if your brother offends against you and you forgive him before he asks your forgiveness."

79. An elder said, "In every trial, do not blame somebody else but yourself alone and say, 'This happened to me on account of my sins.'" Ōr 12; N 305

80. An elder said, "I never exceeded my station to parade on high nor was I troubled when brought down in humility. My entire occupation is to beseech God until he casts me out from the Old Man." N 660

81. A brother asked an elder, "What is humble-mindedness?" "It is to do good to those who wrong you," the elder said. "And if one cannot measure up to that stature, what should he do?" the brother said. "Let him run away and elect to remain silent," the elder said. N 305 A

82. Another brother asked him, "Tell us about salvation, Abba; but even if you tell us, we will not retain it, for our ground is salted."

83. A brother asked an elder, "What is the practice of living in alienation?" He said to him, "I know of a brother who lived as a stranger.[5] He was in a church one day when, as chance would have it, there was an *agapē*, so he sat down at table to eat with the brothers. But some said, 'Who has invited this fellow?' and they said to him, 'Get up and get out,' so he stood up and left. But other brothers, distressed at this, went and invited him. Afterward, somebody asked him, 'What was in your heart when you were thrown out and then brought back in?' 'I put it in my heart,' he said 'that I am like a dog that goes when it is driven off and comes when it is called.'" N 306

84. One day some people came to an elder in the Thebaid bringing with them a person possessed of a demon so he could cure him. Persistently entreated, the elder said to the demon, "Come out of that which God has made," and the demon said to the elder, "I am coming out, but let me ask you one question: Who are the goats N 307

[5] *Xeniteia*: literally, living in a foreign land.

in the Gospel and who are the sheep?" [see Matt 25:32-33]. Said the elder, "The goats—it is I; God knows who the sheep are." On hearing this, the demon cried out with a loud voice, "Look, I am coming out on account of your humility," and he left that very hour.

N 308 85. An Egyptian monk was living in a suburb of Constantinople in the reign of the emperor Theodosius the Younger [Theodosius II, 408–50]. Passing along that road, the emperor abandoned everybody and came alone knocking at the door of the monk. He opened the door and recognized who it was but received him as though he were an imperial officer. When he came in, they offered a prayer and sat down; then the emperor began to examine him about how it was with the fathers in Egypt. He said, "They are all praying for your empire," also saying, "Do have something to eat." He moistened some [dry] bread for him, adding a little oil and salt, and he ate. He gave him some water, and he drank it. "Do you know who I am?" the emperor said to him, but [the monk] said, "God knows who you are." "I am Theodosius the emperor," he said to him, and the elder immediately prostrated himself before him. The emperor said to him, "Blessed are you who do not have to worry about your lives. In truth, I was born in the palace but never had enjoyment the way I did from this bread and water today; I have eaten with great delight." From then on, the emperor began to revere him, but the elder got up and fled; he went back to Egypt again.

N 309 86. The elders used to say, "When we are not under attack, that is when we should especially humble ourselves. For, aware of our weakness, God is protecting us. But if we boast about it, he will remove his protection from us; then are we lost."

N 310 87. The devil appeared to a brother in the disguise of an angel of light, saying to him, "I am the archangel

Gabriel, and I was sent to you." "Make sure you were not sent to somebody else," said the brother to him, "for I am not worthy to see an angel," and [the demon] immediately disappeared.

88. The elders used to say, "Even if an angel really does appear to you, do not acknowledge it but humble yourself, saying, 'I am unworthy to see an angel, for I am living in sins.'" N 311

89. They told of a certain elder that while he was living in his cell fighting the good fight, he distinctly saw the demons—and that he despised them. When the devil perceived that the elder had got the better of him, he came and appeared to him, saying, "I am Christ," but the elder closed his eyes at the sight of him. "Why are you closing your eyes?" the devil said to him; "I am Christ!" In reply the elder said to him, "I have no wish to see Christ here." The devil disappeared when he heard that. N 312

90. Wishing to lead him astray, the demons said to another elder, "Would you like to see Christ?" but he said to them, "You and what you are saying are anathema. I believe in my Christ who says, 'If any man shall say to you, "Look, here is Christ, or there," believe it not'" [Matt 24:23], and they immediately disappeared. N 313

91. They told of another elder that he went fasting for seventy weeks, eating once a week. He asked God about a saying in the Scriptures, and God did not reveal [it] to him. He said to himself, "So much effort and I have gained nothing. I will go to my brother and ask him." As he was closing the door to set out, an angel of the Lord was sent to him who said, "The seventy weeks of your fasting have not brought you close to God. But when you humbled yourself to go to your brother, I was sent to explain the saying to you." He assured the elder about the saying he sought to understand and then left him. N 314

N 380 92. They used to say of one of the fathers that for seven years he asked God for a particular gift and was given it. He went to a great elder and told him about the gift, but that elder was saddened when he heard. "Great work," he said. "Go and spend another seven years entreating God to take it away from you; it is not good for you." He went and did so until [the gift] was taken away from him.

N 315 93. One of the fathers used to say that if, in the fear of God and humility, one requires a brother to perform a task, that command, coming as it were from God himself, would cause the brother to submit and perform the task. But if somebody wishes to lay a command on a brother not out of fear of God but because he wants to exercise authority over him, God who sees the secrets of the heart does not give the brother assurance to heed or to perform. It is clear when a task is done for God and clear when it is in response to authority: the godly command is humble and comes with an entreaty, while the authoritarian, irate, and peremptory one is from the evil one.

N 316 94. An elder said, "I prefer defeat with humility to victory with pride."

N 317 95. An elder said, "Do not despise your companion; you do not know whether the Spirit of God is in you or in him. By 'your companion' I mean the one who waits on you."

N 318 96. A brother asked an elder, "If I am living with some brothers and I notice something inappropriate happening, do you want me to speak up?" "If they are older than you or of the same age, you are more likely to have repose by keeping quiet, for in so doing, you will make yourself the lesser and unconcerned," the elder told him. "But what am I to do, father, for the spirits are troubling me?" the brother said. The elder said, "If you are weary,

in humble-mindedness remind them once, and if they will not heed you, then cast your burden before the Lord and he will give you rest [see Ps 54:23]. This is what it means to throw oneself into the presence of God and to abandon one's own will. Nevertheless, take care not to make a show of it, to ensure that your concern is according to God's will. In my opinion, though, it is better to keep quiet, for that really is humble-mindedness."

97. Another brother asked an elder, "What is a person's progress in godliness?" "A person's progress is humility," said the elder. "A person makes progress insofar as he humbles himself." N 381

98. One of the fathers said, "If somebody with a humble mind says to another, 'Forgive me,' he burns up the demons." N 320a

99. He also said, "If you acquire silence, do not consider that you have achieved a virtue, but say, 'I am not worthy to speak.'" N 321

100. An elder said, "If the miller did not put a blindfold on the animal's eyes, it would turn about and eat the [fruit of] its labor. Similarly, by Divine Providence we receive blindfolds so that we do not think highly of ourselves at the sight of our good works and thus lose our reward. For this reason, from time to time we are left in unclean *logismoi*, and we only see them so that we should condemn ourselves; and the unclean things themselves become a blindfold [concealing] the little good [we do]. For when a person blames himself, he does not lose his toil." N 322

101. An elder said, "I would rather be taught than teach." N 668

102. He also said, "Do not teach before it is time, otherwise you will be diminished in understanding the whole time." N 669

N 323 103. An elder was asked, "What is humility?" He replied, "Humility is a great and godly work. This is the way of humility: physical labor and holding oneself to be a sinner, inferior to everybody." Then the brother asked, "What does 'inferior to everybody' mean?" "It is this," said the elder: "to pay attention not to the sins of others but always to one's own, and to beseech God without ceasing."

N 329 104. A monk who received a hurt from somebody contained the hurt within himself and prostrated himself before him who had hurt him.

N 324–25 105–6. A brother asked an elder, "Tell me one activity so I can maintain it and, through it, pursue all the virtues." The elder said to him, "He can be saved who tolerates being held of no account, insulted, and punished."

N 326 107. An elder said, "Do not get acquainted with a *higoumen*, and do not be often in his presence, for this way you will become familiar with him and be wanting to direct others yourself."

James 2 108. He also said, "One who is praised ought to think of his own sins and that he is not worthy of what is being said."

N 328 109. There was a brother in a *coenobion* who took all the burdens of the brothers on his own shoulders, even to the point of accusing himself of *porneia*. There were some brothers who, unaware that this was what he was doing, began to grumble about him, saying, "What a lot of bad things he does, and he does not even work!" The *abba*, however, who *was* aware of what the brother was doing, said to the brothers, "I prefer the one rush mat he makes with humility to all yours [made in] pride." Wishing to convince them, he brought out all their handwork, including the one mat of the brother, lit a fire, and threw them on it. They were all burned up except for the mat that the brother had made. The brothers were stricken

with fear when they saw this and prostrated themselves before the brother, and henceforth the brothers had him as a father.

110. An elder was asked, "How do some people say, 'We see visions of angels?'" "Blessed is he who always sees his own sins," he said in reply. N 332

111. One brother was aggrieved with another who, when he learned of this, came to apologize to him, but [the brother] did not open the door to him, so he went to an elder and told him of the matter. In answer the elder said, "Make sure there is no laying the blame on your brother in your heart, no making him responsible, no justifying yourself, lest perchance that is why he was not sufficiently satisfied to open the door to you. However, do what I am about to tell you: even though it was he who sinned against you, go and get it into your heart that it is you who wronged him, and put your brother in the right; God will then satisfy him to be reconciled with you." N 319; N 334b

Then the elder told him this example: "There were two worldlings, pious and of one mind, who went out and became monks. Carried away by enthusiasm, they misinterpreted the passage in the Gospel and made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven [see Matt 19:12]. The archbishop excommunicated them when he heard of it. Under the impression that they had done well, they were angry with him and said, 'We made ourselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven, and he has shut us out; let us go appeal against him to the archbishop of Jerusalem.' So they went and reported everything to him, but the archbishop said to them, 'I also am excluding you.' This grieved them yet again; they went to Antioch to the archbishop there and described their case to him, but he excluded them too. 'Let us go to Rome to the patriarch,' they said to each other, 'and he will vindicate us against all these.' So they went to

the great archbishop of Rome and reported to him what the [other] archbishops had done to them, saying, 'We came to you because you are the head of all.' He too, however, said to them, 'I also am excluding you, and excluded you have been.' In their confusion they said to each other, 'These [archbishops] do favors for each other, for they meet in synods, but let us go to the saint of God Epiphanius, the bishop of Cyprus [ob. 403], for he is a prophet and no respecter of persons.' Their situation was revealed to him as they approached his city; he sent someone to meet them and to say to them, 'Do not even enter this city either.' Coming now to their senses, they said, 'We are indeed at fault; why should we justify ourselves? Maybe the others excluded us unjustly, but is not this man a prophet? See, God has revealed our case to him,' and they roundly condemned themselves for what they had done. But when God who knows the secrets of our hearts saw that they truly condemned themselves, he satisfied bishop Epiphanius, who took it upon himself to send and fetch them. He exhorted them and then received them into communion. He wrote to the archbishop of Alexandria, saying, 'Receive your children, for they have truly repented.'"

The elder said, "This is the healing of the person, and this is what God desires: that one take one's fault upon himself and beseech God." On hearing this, the brother did as the elder said. He went and knocked on the door of the brother who, as soon as he heard him, apologized to him first from within. Then he opened up immediately; they heartily embraced each other, and there came about a great peace upon them both.

N 77 112. There were two monks, brothers by birth, and the devil wanted to distance them from each other. One day the younger brother lit the lamp and put it on the stand, but the demon contrived to overturn the lamp-stand. His brother struck him in anger, but he prostrated himself, saying, "Be patient with me, my brother; I am lighting

it again," and here the power of the Lord came forth and tormented the demon until dawn. The demon came and reported what had happened to his leader. When the priest of the pagans heard the demon telling his tale, he went off and became a monk. He persevered in humility from the beginning, saying, "Humility dissolves all the power of the enemy, as I myself heard them saying, 'When we trouble the monks, one of them turns round and prostrates himself—and he annuls all our power.'"

113. Abba Longinus said, "Piety with humility is universally good. There is one who is smiling and appearing to be gracious; if he does this for long, he is censured. But the pious person who shores himself up with humble-mindedness is always held in honor."

114. He also said, "Humility has strength beyond any lordship; for one of the fathers told how two bishops who were close to each other once became contemptuous of each other. The one was rich and powerful, the other humble; the powerful one was seeking to wrong the humble one. When the humble-minded one heard, knowing what he would do, he said to his clergy, 'We can triumph by the grace of God,' but they said, 'Lord-and-master, who can get the better of that one?' and he said, 'Wait, my sons, and you can see the mercy of God.' *PS* 210

"Watching for an occasion, when that [bishop] was holding a feast of the holy martyrs, he gathered his clergy and said to them, 'Follow me, and whatever you see me doing, do likewise; we can triumph over him.' They said, 'Now what can we do?' They came toward [the other bishop] as the procession was passing by and the whole city was assembled. [The humble bishop] fell at [the other bishop's] feet together with his clergy, saying, 'Forgive us, Lord-and-master; we are your slaves.' [The other bishop] was astounded at what [the humble bishop] had done; since God had changed his heart, stung by compunction, he grasped [the humble bishop's]

feet, saying, 'You are my Lord-and-master and father,' and thereafter great love reigned between them.

"The humble-minded one said to his clergy, 'Did I not tell you, my sons, that we could triumph through the grace of God?' So when you have enmity toward someone, do this and you will triumph through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

115. Abba Marcian said, "If we had been careful about humble-mindedness, we would not have needed correction, for all our dangers happen because of pride. Now if an angel of Satan was given to the apostle that he be not proud but be beaten [2 Cor 12:7], how much more, then, shall Satan himself be given to us who are proud, to tread us down until we are humbled?"

N 565 116. They used to say of Abba Serapion that his life was like that of one of the birds. Not a thing of this world did he possess, nor did he ever stay in a cell. He used to go around with a little gospel [book], wearing a shroud like an incorporeal being. They would often find him sitting outside a village or by the roadside, weeping bitterly. When he was asked, "Why are you crying like that, elder?" he replied, "My Lord-and-master entrusted me with his wealth, but I have lost and squandered it; he wants to punish and to destroy me." Thinking he was talking about money, they who were hearing this threw him a little bread, saying, "Take this, brother; and so far as the wealth you lost, God can send it to you," to which the elder answered, "Amen."

N 566 117. Another time when he was going around in Alexandria, he met a pauper shivering with cold. Coming to a standstill, he thought to himself, "How can I, who am supposed to be an ascetic and a worker, be wearing a smock while this pauper (or rather, Christ himself [see Matt 25:35-45]) is dying of cold? If I leave him to die, I shall certainly be judged to be a murderer on the Day of Judgment." Stripping down like a good athlete,

he gave the article of clothing he was wearing to the pauper. Then he sat down naked with the little gospel [book] he always carried tucked under his arm. When the so-called peace officer came by and saw him naked, he said to him, "Abba Serapion, who stripped you?" and producing the little gospel [book], he said to him, "This one stripped me." Getting up from there, he met another person who was being arrested by somebody else for a debt he could not repay. This immortal Serapion sold the gospel [book] and gave [the proceeds] toward the debt of the poor man who was suffering violence; then off he went, naked, to his cell. When his disciple saw him naked, he said to him, "Abba, where is your little vest?" The elder told him, "I sent it on to where we shall need it, my son." "And where is the little gospel [book]?" the brother said to him. The elder replied, "Well, naturally, my son, [that being] the very thing that says to me every day, 'Sell all that you have and give to the poor' [Matt 19:21], I sold it and gave away the proceeds so that we shall enjoy greater familiarity with [God] on the Day of Judgment."

118. There was a brother living at Monidia who, through the machination of the devil, often used to fall into *porneia* but stayed on, constraining himself not to abandon the monastic habit. When he was offering his little act of worship, he would beseech God with groans, saying, "Lord, you see my necessity; restrain me. Save me, Lord, whether I want it or not. Because I am but dust, I long for sin; but do you, being a mighty God, inhibit me. If you have mercy only on the righteous, that is no great thing; and if you save the pure, it is small wonder, for these are worthy to receive mercy. But to me, the unworthy one, Lord-and-master, 'perform the wonder of your mercy' [Ps 16:7], and show your loving kindness in this, for 'the life of the poor has been left in your hands'" [Ps 9:35]. These things he would say every day, whether he was falling or not falling. N 582

On one occasion, however, falling into his habitual sin by night, he promptly got up and began the canon [of psalms]. But the devil, amazed at his hope and his shamelessness in the face of God, appeared to him visibly and said to him, "How do you not blush all over to stand before God or to utter his name while you are singing Psalms?" The brother said to him, "This cell is a forge; you give a hammer blow and you receive one. I am going on wrestling with you until death, where in the end I will kill you. And I assure you with oaths by him who came 'to save sinners who repent' [Luke 5:32] that I shall not desist from praying to God against you until you too stop fighting against me. Let us see who will triumph: you or God." When the demon heard this, he said to him, "Indeed I will fight with you no longer, for fear that I might procure you a crown for your perseverance," and the demon retreated from him from that day on.

See what a good thing patient endurance is, [as is] not despairing of oneself, even though it happens that we often fall in battles, sins, and temptations. Experiencing sorrow for sin, in future the brother sat weeping for his sins. So when his *logismos* used to say to him, "You are weeping well," for his part he would say, "A curse on that 'well,' for why does God tell someone through an oracle to lose his soul and to sit lamenting for it, whether in the future it saves itself or not?"[6]

N 583 119. There was a brother living in isolation at the same monastery, Monidia, and this was his constant prayer: "Lord, since I do not fear you, send a lightning strike or some other catastrophe, or a sickness, or a demon; by this means, perhaps my adamantine soul will come to fear [you]." This is what he would say, earnestly interceding with God thus: "I know it is impossible for you to forgive me, for I have sinned against your name

[6] The meaning is obscure here.

mightily, Lord-and-master—mightily and wickedly. But if [this prayer] is accepted, do you in your compassion forgive me**.** But if it is not found acceptable, then punish me here, Lord-and-master, and do not punish me there. If that cannot be done, then give me a part of my punishment here and reduce my affliction there even just a little. Only do begin punishing me right away, not in your anger [see Ps 37:2], Lord-and-master, but in your loving kindness."

He persisted in this way for a whole year without a break, entreating God with a broken heart, with fasts, and in great humility. Then he had a *logismos*; he said to himself, "What is the meaning of that saying of Christ, 'Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted'?" [Matt 5:4]. Then one day, as he was sitting on the ground lamenting as usual, worn out by discouragement, he nodded off, and Christ was standing right there beside him and speaking to him with a cheerful voice and countenance, "What is the matter with you, man? Why are you weeping?" The brother said to him, "Because I fell, Lord." The apparition said to him, "Get up!" "I cannot unless you give me a hand" [the brother] replied, and [Christ] stretched out his hand and raised him up, joyfully saying to him again, "Why are you weeping? What is distressing you?" "Do you not want me to weep and be grieved, Lord, I who have so grieved you?" the brother replied. Then the apparition stretched out his hand and placed his palm on the man's heart and anointed it, saying, "Do not be distressed, do not be distressed. God will help you in the future. Because you were grieved, I am not grieving over you anymore. I gave my blood for you; how much more so, then, [shall I give] my loving kindness to each soul that repents?"

When the brother came to himself after the vision, he found his heart replete with all joy, and he was assured that God had dealt mercifully with him [Luke 10:37]. He ever remained in great humility, giving thanks to God.

N 587 120. A brother visited one of the fathers and said to him, "What is it, Father? How are you?" "Bad," the elder replied. The brother said, "Why is that, Abba?" Then the elder said, "Look, for thirty years I have stood before the Lord every day bringing down curses on myself in my prayer; for I say to God, 'Be not merciful to all the doers of wickedness' [Ps 58:6]. And, 'Exterminate all the sinners' [Ps 144:20], and 'Cursed are they who incline away from your commandments' [Ps 118:21].

"Then again each day I lie, saying to God, 'You destroy all those who speak lies' [Ps 5:7]. I who hold a grudge against my brother say to God, 'Forgive us as we forgive' [Matt 6:12]; I whose entire concern is what to eat say, 'I forgot to eat my bread' [Ps 101:5]; I who sleep until dawn sing, 'At midnight I would rise to confess thee' [Ps 118:62]. I have no grief for sin at all, and yet I say, 'I became weary of my groaning' [Ps 6:7], and again, 'My tears have been my meat day and night' [Ps 41:4]; and while entertaining evil thoughts in my heart, I say to God, 'The meditation of my heart is ever before you' [Ps 18:15].

"And again, a complete stranger to fasting, I say, 'My knees became weak from fasting [Ps 108:24]; quite replete with pride and physical comfort, I deceive only myself when I sing, 'Consider my humility and toil, and forgive all my sins' [Ps 24:18], and again, totally unprepared, I say, 'My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready!' [Ps 56:8]

"In brief, my entire act of worship turned into accusation and condemnation of me." The brother said to the elder, "Father, I think it was of himself alone that David spoke all those things." Then the elder groaned and said, "Believe me, my son, it stands to reason that we are going to perdition if we do not observe [in practice] the things we sing in the presence of God."

N 588 121. A brother asked an elder, "Why is it that this generation cannot maintain the ascetic discipline of the

fathers?" The elder said to him, "Because it neither loves God nor flees from folk nor hates the material goods of the world. Ascetic discipline comes of its own accord to a person who flees from human company and material goods. Just as one cannot put out a fire that has been lit in his field unless he gets ahead of it and cuts away the matter in front of it, so too unless a person goes to a place where he gains even his bread with toil, he cannot acquire ascetic discipline; unless the soul see, it does not soon desire."

122. There was a great elder living in Syria, in the region of Antioch, who had a brother living with him. The brother was prone to criticize if he saw somebody tripping up. The elder often reproved him on this score, saying, "My son, you are really going astray and only losing your own soul, for nobody knows a person other than the Spirit who dwells within him [1 Cor 2:10-11]; for many people frequently performing many evil deeds in the sight of folk repent in secret before God and are accepted. We know the sin, but God alone knows the other good deeds they have done. There are moreover many who, having lived their whole life badly, are found repenting in the hour of death, at the end, and are saved. There are also sinners who found acceptance through the prayer of the holy ones. This is why one person must not in any way judge another, even if he sees with his own eyes. There is one judge: the Son of God. Everyone who judges another is found to be an 'antijudge' and an 'antigod' to Christ, for he has usurped the status, honor, and authority that God the Father gave to him, becoming a judge superior to the Judge." N 589

123. He also said about grudge-bearing [rancor], "Not ever to fight with or to upset anybody or to be upset on anybody's account is a property of the angels alone. To be somewhat offended then immediately reconciled is the mark of good warriors. But if one is offended

and afflicted and he maintains his sorrow and rage for some time (even for a day), he becomes a brother of the demons. He can neither ask nor receive forgiveness of sins from God as long as he does not forgive his brother, even if [his brother] sinned against him."

N 590 124. He also said, "The thief, the liar, or another kind of sinner often, as soon as he has committed the sin, either sighs or reproaches himself and comes to repentance. The rancor that a man carries in his soul, however, is always gnawing away at him inwardly like a poison whether he is eating or drinking, sleeping or walking. Thus, he can never rid himself of the sin, and his prayer becomes a curse for him; his entire toil is counted as nothing with God; his prayer is unacceptable, even if he sheds his blood for Christ."

125. An elder said, "There is nothing filthier than a sinful human being, neither the dog nor the pig, for they are irrational and keep to their own status, whereas the human, being in the image of God, did not keep its own status."

126. He also said, "Woe to the soul that is accustomed to sin; it is like a dog accustomed to the food at the butcher's: even though it is often chased off and whipped and takes itself off for a while, it comes back again by habit and for the food, and there it stays until it dies."

127. He also said to his disciple, "Woe to us, my son, for we do not fear God, not even so much as [we fear] a dog." His disciple said to him, "Do not talk like that, Father; you are blaspheming." The elder said to him, "Whether I am blaspheming or not, one thing I know. I often used to go off by night to a place for sinning. As I approached, when I heard the barking of dogs at the place, I immediately turned back for fear of them. Fear of beasts was strong enough to do what fear of God did not."

128. He also said, "If we love God the way we love folk, we are fortunate. For I see many who, after mourning their friends, did not desist by night or by day making intercessions and sending gifts until they made them reconciled; whereas for the God who is distressed with us, we have no thought of beseeching him to be reconciled with us."

129. A diligent brother came from afar and lived on his own in a small cell on Mount Sinai. The first day when he came to stay there, he found a small piece of wood that had been inscribed thus by the brother who had lived there before him: "I, Moses son of Theodore, am here and bearing witness." The brother set the piece of wood before his eyes every day and asked the one who wrote it as though he were present, "Where are you now, oh man, that you say, 'I am present and bearing witness'? What kind of world are you in at this time? And where is the hand that wrote this?" Spending the whole day in this activity and mindful of the grave, he went on grieving. His manual activity was that of a scribe. He received paper and orders for copies from many brothers, but he died without writing anything for anybody. He wrote on the paper of each [brother], "Brother, forgive me, sir. I had a little business to do with somebody, and for that reason I did not have time to write." N 519–20

Another brother was living close by him. One day, when he was going into the town, he said to the brother who was a scribe, "Brother, of your charity, please look after the garden until I come." "Believe me, to the best of my ability, I shall not neglect it," that brother said. But when this brother had left, that brother said to himself, "Now, you lowly fellow, care for the garden insofar as you find opportunity to do so." He was on his feet [offering the] canon [of psalms] from evening until dawn, ceaselessly singing and praying with tears in his eyes; [he did] likewise all the daytime too, for it was a Sunday. When the brother returned toward evening, he observed

that the porcupines had ravaged the garden, and he said to [the scribe], "May God forgive you, brother, for you did not take care of the garden!" But he said, "God saw, Abba, that I did it to the best of my ability; I watered it and watched over it. God knows and will grant that the little garden will provide for us with a crop." The gardener said, "But it really is completely devastated!" The scribe said, "I know, but I have faith that it will blossom again." "Come on, then," said the proprietor of the garden. "Let us water it." The brother [who was a scribe] said to him, "You go and water now, and I will water it at night." Then there was a draught; in his distress the gardener said to his neighbor the scribe, "Believe me, brother, unless God comes to our aid, we shall have no water this year." The other said, "Then we are in deep trouble, for if the springs in the garden run dry, we no longer have any hope of survival," but he was speaking of tears.

When that noble warrior was at the point of death, he called his neighbor and said to him, "Of your charity, brother, do not tell anybody I am ill, but stay here today and, when I migrate to the Lord, take my corpse and cast it naked into the wilderness so the wild beasts and the birds might devour it, for it has greatly sinned against God and is not worthy of burial." "Believe me, Abba, my soul is hesitant to do this thing," the gardener said to him. The sick man answered him, "I am responsible for this decision, and I give you my word that if you obey me and do as I ask, I will help you if I am able to do so." So when he died, the very same day the brother did as [the scribe] had told him to do: he threw [the scribe's] naked body away, for they were living some twenty miles from the town. On the third day, the brother who had gone to the Lord appeared to him in his sleep and said to him, "God will have mercy on you, brother, just as you had mercy on me. Believe me, God has shown great mercy to me because my corpse remained unburied, saying to me, 'Look, on account

of your great humility, I am ordering that you are to be with Antony'—and here, I interceded for you. Go now, abandon that garden and cultivate the *other* garden,[7] for in the hour when my soul went out, I saw that my tears quenched the fire into which I was heading."

130. A brother living on the Mount of Olives came down into the Holy City one day, went to the governor, and confessed his sins to him, saying, "Punish me in accordance with the law." Amazed by this, the governor made a decision in his mind. "Really, my man," he said to the brother, "Now that you have confessed of your own free will, I dare not judge you before God, for perhaps God has forgiven you." The brother went away, put his feet and his neck in irons, and confined himself in a cell. If anybody asked him, "Who imposed such constraint in irons on you, Abba?" he would say that it was the governor. But the day before his death, the irons opened of their own accord and fell off him. I was amazed when I saw this, and I said to him, "Who loosed the irons from you?" He said to me, "He who loosed my sins; for he appeared to me yesterday, saying, 'Look, I have deleted all your sins on account of your patient endurance.' He touched the irons with his finger, and they immediately fell away from me." Having said this, the brother forthwith migrated to the Lord. N 527

131. There was an imperial officer who had done many dreadful things and had defiled his body in every kind of way. Pricked in his conscience by God, he went off and renounced the world. He built himself a cell in a desert place down in a wadi and took up residence there, taking thought for his own soul. When some of his acquaintances learned of this, they started sending him bread, dates, and things he needed. When he realized that he was living in repose and that he lacked nothing, N 528

[7] That is, the garden of the soul.

he said to himself, "We are accomplishing nothing; this repose is casting us out of the rest that is to come, for I am unworthy of it." He abandoned his cell and went away, saying, "Soul, let us go to affliction so we do not fall into affliction in the future. Grass and the food of beasts are suitable for me, for I have lived and acted like the beasts."

N 530 132. There was a brother living the monastic life quite negligently. When he was about to die, some of the fathers were sitting with him. Perceiving that he was departing from the body in joy and gladness and wanting to edify the brothers, the elder said to him, "Brother, believe me, we all know that you have not been very zealous in your ascetic practice; how then are you going forth so eagerly?" Said the brother, "Believe me, Father, what you said is true. Yet from when I became a monk, I do not know that I ever passed judgment on anybody who slipped up or held a grudge against anybody, for I immediately reconciled myself with him the same day; and I want to say to God, 'Lord-and-master, you said, "Judge not that you be not judged," and, "Forgive and it shall be forgiven you."'" Everybody was edified, and the elder said to him, "Peace be with you my son, for you have been saved without toil."

N 532 133. An Egyptian brother who was embattled by *porneia* visited this man and begged the elder to pray on his behalf that the assault might be withdrawn from him, and for seven days [the elder] begged God on his behalf. On the eighth day he asked the brother, "How goes the battle, brother?" "Badly," he said to him. "I have not really experienced any withdrawal whatsoever," so the elder was astonished. Then Satan appeared to him that very night and said to him, "Believe me, elder, I got right out of him the first day you besought God, but he has his own demon and his own battle with gluttony; I have nothing to do with that battle. He is at war with himself, eating, drinking, and sleeping a great deal."

134. Abba Theodore told us that there was a brother who had the gift of sorrow for sin. One day a wealth of tears came upon him from the pain in his heart. Perceiving this, the brother said to himself, "This is truly an indication that the day of my death now is near." N 537a

135. There is a mountain in Egypt on the way to the desert of Scete called Phermē. About five hundred folk are leading an ascetic life on that mountain, among whom there is one by the name of Paul, an excellent monk who maintained this way of life all his days. He set his hand to no task, nor did he ever take anything from anybody other than what he was going to eat that same day, for his ascetic task was to pray without ceasing. He had three hundred prescribed prayers; he would gather up the same number of pebbles and keep them in his bosom, throwing one away out of his bosom for each [prayer]. This godly man visited the holy Macarius—the one called the Citizen—for conversation and spiritual benefit and said to him, "Abba Macarius, I am severely afflicted," so the servant of Christ obliged him to say why he was afflicted. Said [the visitor] to him, "There was a virgin who for thirty years was leading an ascetic life in a certain village in which I lived; they told me many things about her. With the exception of Saturday and Sunday, she never ate on another day; all her days for weeks on end she waited five days to eat, offering seven hundred prayers. I despaired of myself when I heard this, that I, a male, created with this vigor, was not able to offer any more than three hundred." In reply the holy Macarius said to him, "For sixty years I have been offering one hundred prescribed prayers, working with my hands to provide food, and providing the brothers with the benefit of conversation, and my *logismos* is not accusing me of negligence. But if you who are offering three hundred prayers are being judged by your conscience, what can I say to you?" *HL* 20

136. A brother asked an elder about detachment, and he replied, "Brother, frequent reading of the divine Scriptures contributes to [detachment], together with the sayings of the God-bearing fathers about sorrow for sin and remembrance of the fearful judgments of God, the exiting of the soul from the body, and the fearful powers that are going to meet it, as well as the evil [the soul] committed in this fleeting and miserable life. Then [remember] too how we are going to stand before the fearful and impartial judgment seat of Christ and to account not only for deeds but for words and thoughts too before God and all his angels and, in brief, the entire creation. Always bear in mind too that judgment which the fearful and righteous judge will pronounce to those on the left, 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels' [Matt 25:41]. It is good also to bear in mind the great afflictions of humankind so that the hard and insensitive soul may be softened and become sensitive to its own evil condition. Weakness in love of one's brothers results from allowing *logismoi* of jealousy to get in, trusting in your own heart, and an unwillingness to suffer anything contrary to one's own choice. Be of a mind (with the help of God) before all else not to trust your own ideas at all; with all your strength humble yourself before the brothers and cut your own will off from yourself. If one of them insults you or another afflicts you some day, pray for him as though he were performing great things for you [in the role of] a physician to your vanity (as the fathers said). As a result of that, your anger is lessened, for as the holy fathers say, love is the bridle of anger. Above all, intercede with God to grant you vigilance and intelligence to know 'his good, acceptable, and perfect will' [Rom 12:2] and also the power to be made 'perfect in every good work'" [Heb 13:21].

16

Forbearance [*Anexikakia*]

1. Some brothers once visited Abba Anthony and said to him, "Utter a saying for us on how we are to be saved." The elder said to them, "You have heard the Scripture; that is good enough for you," but they said, "We want to hear from you too, Father." So the elder said to them, "The Gospel says, 'Whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also'" [Matt 5:39]. "We cannot do that," they said, [whereupon] the elder said to them, "If you cannot turn the other [cheek], then at least patiently endure the first [blow]," but they said to him, "We cannot do that either." The elder said to them, "If you cannot do that, then do not return [the blow] you received," but they said, "Neither can we do that." The elder said to his disciple, "Make them a little soup, for they are sick," and he said [to them], "If you cannot do this and you will not do that, what can I do for you? You need prayers." Anthony 19

2. They used to say of Abba Gelasius that he had a book on parchment worth eighteen pieces of gold; it had the whole of the Old and the New Testaments written in it. It lay in the church so that any of the brothers who wished to do so might read it. A brother coming from abroad visited the elder, saw the book, and coveted it; he stole it and went away. But although the elder noticed, he did not pursue him. [The thief] went into the city and tried to sell it. When he found somebody willing to buy it, he asked a price of sixteen pieces of gold for it, but the would-be purchaser said to him, "First let me validate it, then I will supply the price," so [the brother] Gelasius 1

gave him the book. He took it and brought it to Abba Gelasius to validate it, telling him the price the seller was asking. The elder said to him, "Buy it; for it is good and worth the price you stated." The fellow came and spoke differently to the one who was selling it and not as the elder had spoken, saying, "Look, I showed it to Abba Gelasius, and he told me that it was dear and not worth what you are asking for it." When he heard that, he said, "Did the elder say anything else to you?" "No," he said. "I do not want to sell it," the brother said, and, pricked in his conscience, he went to the elder, apologizing and begging him to accept [the book]—but [the elder] did not want to take it. Then the brother said to him, "If you do not take it, I shall have no repose." He said to him, "If you have no repose, see then, I will take it." The brother stayed there until his death, edified by the action of the elder.

Evagrius 7

3. Once there was a meeting at The Cells for some matter, and an *abba* named Evagrius spoke. The priest of the monasteries said to him, "Abba Evagrius, we know that if you were in your homeland, you would perhaps have been a bishop or the head of a great company; but now you are here as an alien." He was truly deflated and made no turbulent reply, but nodding his head and with eyes cast down, he wrote with his finger, saying to them, "It is indeed true, fathers; nevertheless, 'once have I spoken' according to the Scriptures, and indeed 'I will add nothing a second time'" [Job 40:5].

John Colobos 8

4. Abba John Colobos was once sitting before the church surrounded by the brothers who were examining their own *logismoi*. When he saw [him], one of the elders who was embattled by jealousy said to him, "Your bottle is full of poison, Abba John." Abba John said to him, "So it is, Father; and you said that from only seeing the outside. What would you have said if you had seen the inside?"

John of Thēbes 1

5. They used to say of Abba John of Thēbes, the disciple of Abba Ammōes, that he spent twelve years waiting on the elder when he was sick, sitting on a mat with him. The elder did not think much of him, and, although [Abba John] labored mightily in his service, [Abba Ammōes] never said to him, "Be saved." But when [the elder] was about to die and the elders were sitting there, he took [Abba John's] hand and said, "Be saved, be saved," and he gave him to the elders, saying, "This is an angel, not a human."

Isidore of Scete 1

6. They used to say of Abba Isidore, the priest of Scete, that if anybody had a brother who was weak, negligent, or insolent and he wanted to throw him out, the elder would say, "Bring him to me." He would take the brother into his cell and save him through long-suffering patience.

N 708

7. They used to say of Abba Longinus that one of his disciples was once slandered, so that he might send him away. Those associated with Abba Theodore came and said to him, "Abba, we are hearing some trouble or other about this brother; if you bid us, we will take him away from you and bring you a better brother." But the elder said to them, "I am not sending him away, for he gives me repose." When the elder [Theodore] heard the reason, he said, "Ah me! We come here to become angels, and we are becoming irrational, unclean beasts."

Macarius 18

8. When Abba Macarius was in Egypt, he found somebody who had a beast of burden despoiling his cell. Standing at the gate as though he were a stranger, he helped [the fellow] load up the beast and sent him on his way in all tranquility, saying, "'We brought nothing into this world' [1 Tim 6:7]; the Lord has given, and it has transpired as he willed it to; blessed be the Lord in all things" [see Job 1:21].

Moses 3

9. Once when there was a meeting at Scete, the fathers wanted to put Abba Moses to the test. They insulted him,

saying, "How came this Ethiopian to get in among us?" but he kept quiet on hearing this. After they were dismissed, they said to him, "Abba, were you not troubled just now?" "'I was troubled but spoke not'" [Ps 76:5], he said to them.

Paul the Barber 1

10. Abba Paul the Barber and his brother Timothy were living at Scete, and a difference of opinion arose between them for various reasons. "How long are we going to carry on like this?" said Abba Paul, and Abba Timothy said to him, "Of your charity, support me when I oppose you, and when you oppose me, I too will support you." This they did, and they knew repose for the rest of their days.

Poemen 2

11. Abba Paesios, the brother of Abba Poemen, maintained contact with some people outside his cell, and Abba Poemen did not want that. He got up, went to Abba Ammonas, and said to him, "My brother Paesios maintains contact with some people, and I have no repose." Abba Ammonas said to him, "Are you still alive? Go, remain in you cell, and put it into your heart that you have already been a year in the tomb."

Poemen 37

12. Abba Poemen said, "Whatever trouble comes upon you, victory over it is to remain silent."

Sisōēs 1

13. A brother who had been wronged by another brother came to Abba Sisōēs the Theban and said to him, "I have been wronged by a brother, and I want to take vengeance on him too," but the elder entreated him, saying, "No, my son; rather, leave the business of vengeance to God." But he said, "I will not rest until I get my revenge on him." The elder said, "Let us pray, brother." He stood up and said, "Oh God, Oh God, we no longer need you to look after us, for we are reaping our own vengeance." The brother fell at the elder's feet when he heard that, saying, "I will no longer take issue with my brother. Forgive me!"

14. Somebody who saw one who delighted in hard labor carrying a corpse on a litter said to him, "You are bearing the dead; go and bear the living." N 335

15. One of the fathers said, "If someone insults you, bless him, and if he accepts you, it is good for both of you; if not, he gets the insult from God, you the blessing."

16. They used to say of a monk who lived alone that to the extent that somebody was insulting or seeming to irritate him, so would he be running after that person, saying, "Such people are the occasion of correction for the diligent, whereas those who speak well of them disturb the soul, for it is written, 'Those who speak well of us are leading us astray'" [see Isa 9:15].

17. An elder said, "If somebody retains the memory of one who afflicted him, dishonored him, grieved him, or injured him, he ought to remember that person as a physician sent by Christ and ought to hold him to be a benefactor. The very fact that you are hurt by such things indicates that your soul is sick, for if you were not sick, you would not suffer. You ought to be happy to have such a brother, for it is through him that you become aware of your own illness. You ought to pray for him and receive that which comes from him as a healing medicine sent by the Lord. If, on the other hand, you resent him, in effect you are saying to Jesus, 'I do not wish to receive your cures; I prefer to suppurate in my wounds.'"

18. He also said, "He who wishes to find healing for the severe wounds of his soul in order to be rid of sickness ought to endure the physician's treatment. One whose body is diseased does not gladly undergo an amputation or a purge but recalls them with discomfort. Yet he tells himself that it is impossible for him to be rid of his disease without them. He endures the physician's treatment in the knowledge that a little discomfort will

relieve him of a long illness. Now the cauterizing iron of Jesus is the one who dishonors or abuses you, for he sets you free of vainglory. He who flees from beneficial temptation flees from eternal life. Who bestowed on Saint Stephen such glory as he acquired through those who stoned him?" [see Acts 7:55-60].

19. He also said, "I do not hold it against those who accuse me but call them benefactors. Nor do I reject the Physician of Souls who applies the medicine of dishonor to the vainglorious soul."

20. He also said, "We see the cross of Christ and read about his sufferings, yet we tolerate no insult whatsoever."

N 337 21. Some brigands once came to the monastery of an elder and said to him, "We have come to take everything in your cell." "Take whatever you please, my sons," he said, so they took everything they found in the cell and went their way, but they missed a pouch that was hidden there. The elder picked it up and ran after them, calling out, "My sons, take this [pouch] that you overlooked in the cell." In their amazement at the forbearance of the elder, they restored everything to his cell and apologized, saying to each other, "This is a man of God."

N 343 22. There were two monks living in a location, and a great elder came to visit them. Wishing to test them, he took a staff and began beating down the vegetables of one of them; the brother hid himself when he saw him. But when there was only one plant left standing, the brother said to him, "Abba, if you please, leave that one so that I can cook what it yields and we can eat together." The elder prostrated himself before the brother saying, "The Spirit of God has come to rest on you, brother, on account of your forbearance."

N 338 23. Some brothers visited a holy elder living in a desert place, and they found some children outside his monastery minding [animals] and making indecent remarks.

After [the brothers] had revealed their *logismoi* to him and benefited from his knowledge, they said to him, "Abba, how do you tolerate these children? Why do you not tell them to put an end to their offensive words?" "There are days, of course, brothers, when I would like to tell them [that], but I restrain myself, saying, 'If I cannot stand this little [disturbance], how will I withstand severe temptations if they come upon me?' Thus I say nothing to them so that I can get used to standing whatever comes upon me."

24. They recounted of one elder that he had living with him a young person whom he saw had done something not to his advantage. [The elder] told him once, "Do not do that thing," but the youth heeded him not, so the elder put him out of his mind, leaving him to his own discretion. But the young fellow locked the door of the cell in which the victuals were kept and left the elder fasting for three days. But the elder did not say, "Where were you?" or, "What were you doing out there?" Now the elder had a neighbor; when [the neighbor] noticed that the young man was taking a long time, he cooked him a little food and passed it through the wall, inviting him to eat. "The brother took his time," he said, to which the elder replied, "He will come when he has time." N 341

25. There were some who recounted that philosophers once wanted to put the monks to the test. One [monk] came by dressed in fine clothing, and they said to him, "Come over here, you." This angered him, and he railed at them. Then another monk came by, a great Libyan, and they said to him, "Come here monk, you wicked elder," and he came with alacrity. They gave him some slaps, [but] he turned the other cheek [see Matt 5:39], whereupon they stood up and prostrated themselves before him, saying, "Look, this really is a monk." Then they sat him down in their midst and questioned him, saying, "What do you do in this desert that is more than N 342

we do? You fast, but we fast too. You live in continence; so do we. Whatever you do, we do it too. What, then, over and above that, do you do living in the desert?" The elder said to them, "For our part, we hope in the grace of God and keep our mind in check." For their part, they said, "We are incapable of observing a rule like that," and, edified, they sent him on his way.

The Roman 2

26. There was an elder who had a tried and tested disciple, but he once threw him out for shortcomings; the brother continued living outside. Finding him when he opened [the gate], the elder prostrated himself before him, saying, "Peter, your humility and long-suffering kindness have overcome my shortcomings. Come in; from now on you are the elder and father, I the junior and disciple, because by your action you surpassed my seniority."

N 340

27. One of the elders used to say, "I heard from some of the saints that there are young men who guide elders toward life," and he told this: "There was a drunken elder who made a mat each day, sold it in the village, and then drank the price of it. In due course a brother came and stayed with him, and he too made a mat. The elder took that one too and drank the price of them both, bringing back a little bread for the brother in the evening. He did this for three years, and the brother said nothing. After that he said to himself, 'Look, I am naked and I eat my bread in hunger; I should get up and go away.' Then again he said to himself, 'But where can I go? I will stay here, because it is for the sake of God that I share this life.' Immediately there appeared to him an angel of the Lord saying, 'Do not even think of leaving, for tomorrow we are coming to you.' The brother begged the elder that day, saying, 'Do not go away anywhere, for my people are coming the take me today.' When the time came for the elder to leave, he said to the brother, 'They are not coming today, my son;

they have been detained.' 'Oh yes, they are definitely coming,' he said, and while he was speaking to him, he died. 'Woe is me, my son,' said the elder in tears, 'who have lived so many years in carelessness, while you have saved your soul in a short while by patient endurance.' From then on, the elder reformed his life and became a tried and tested monk."

28. They used to say of a brother who was the neighbor of a great elder that he would come to him and steal whatever [the elder] had in his cell. The elder would see him but would not to reproach him. He would rather work all the more, saying, "Doubtless the brother is in need." Great was the affliction of the elder as he toiled away, finding his food in penury. When he was going to die, the brothers gathered round him. Seeing the one who was stealing from him, he said, "Come near to me." Then he kissed the brother's hands, saying, "I am grateful to these hands, brothers, for it is through them that I am on my way to the kingdom of heaven." The brother was pricked in his conscience; he repented and became a tried and tested monk from observing the deeds the great elder had done. N 339

29. Abba Cassian said that in the time of Isidore the Great, the priest of Scete, there was a deacon called Paphnoutios whom, on account of his virtue, they made a priest to succeed [Isidore] after his death. He, however, through piety did not exercise his ordained status but remained a deacon. One of the elders (through the machination of the enemy) was jealous of him, and when everybody was in church for the *synaxis*, he went and placed his own book in the cell of Abba Paphnoutios and then came and reported to Abba Isidore, "Some one of the brothers stole my book." Abba Isidore was amazed; he said that nothing like that had ever happened at Scete. The elder who had placed the book said to him, "Send two of the fathers with me to search the

cells." Off they went; the elder took them to the cells of the others, then finally to the cell of Abba Paphnoutios. They found the book and brought it to the priest at the church. In the presence of the entire congregation Abba Paphnoutios prostrated himself before Abba Isidore the priest, saying, "I have sinned; give me a penance." He gave him the penance of not receiving Communion for three weeks. Coming at the time of each *synaxis* in front of the church, he would fall down before the entire congregation, saying, "Forgive me, for I have sinned." After the three weeks he was received into communion, and right away the elder who had falsely accused him was possessed of a devil. Then he began to confess, "I falsely accused the servant of God." There was prayer on the part of the entire church on his behalf, but he was not cured. Then Isidore the Great said to Abba Paphnoutios for all to hear, "Pray for him. It was you that was falsely accused, and he will not be cured other than through you." He prayed—and right away the elder became whole.

Nicōn 1

30. A brother asked one of the fathers, "How does the devil bring trials on the holy ones?" The elder said to him, "There was one of the fathers named Nicōn on Mount Sinai. Somebody went to the tent of a Pharanite and, finding his daughter there alone, fell with her; then he said to her, 'Say, "Abba Nicōn the anchorite did this to me."'

"When her father came and learned of this, he took his sword and went to where the elder was. The elder came out when he knocked, and [the father] put up the sword to kill him; but his hand became like wood. The Pharanite went to the church and told the priests; they sent for the elder and he came. They inflicted many wounds on him and wanted to throw him out, but he begged them, saying, 'Let me repent here.' They excommunicated him for three years and made an injunction that no one was to visit him.

"He passed the three years coming on Sunday and repenting; he would entreat [them], saying, 'Pray for me.' Some time later, the one who had committed the sin and had inflicted the trial on the anchorite became possessed of a demon. He confessed before the church, 'I committed the sin; I said that she should falsely accuse the servant of God.' The entire congregation went and apologized to the elder, saying, 'Forgive us, Abba.' He said to them, 'As for forgiving, it is forgiven you; as for staying, I am staying with you no longer because there was not found even one of you who had the discretion to take my part,' and he went away from there."

The elder said to the brother, "Do you see how the devil brings trials on the holy ones?"

17

Love [*Agapē*]

Antony 32 1. Abba Antony said, "I do not fear God anymore; I love him, for 'love casts out fear'" [1 John 4:18].

Antony 9 2. He also said, "Life and death depend on our neighbor, for if we win over the brother, we win over God, but if we offend the brother, we sin against Christ."

Amoun 1 3. Abba Amoun of Nitria visited Abba Antony and said to him, "I observe that I labor harder than you do, so why is your name held in higher honor among folk than mine?" Abba Antony said to him, "It is because in my case I love God more than you do."

Hilarion 1 4. Abba Hilarion from Palestine visited Abba Antony at the mountain, and Abba Antony said to him, "Welcome, star of the morning rising at dawn." "Peace be with you, pillar of light upholding the world," said Abba Hilarion in reply to him.

Antony 27 5. Three of the fathers were in the habit of going to the blessed Abba Antony each year, and two of them would ask him about *logismoi* and the soul's salvation; but one of them always remained silent, asking nothing. After some considerable time, Abba Antony said to him, "Look, you have been coming here for so long, and you have never asked me anything." In reply he said, "It is enough for me just to see you, Father."

Arsenius 13 6. Abba Mark said to Abba Arsenius, "Why do you run away from us?" and the elder said to him, "God knows that I love you, but I cannot be with God and with folk. The thousands and myriads of powers on high have one

will; however, folk have many wills. Therefore, I cannot abandon God to come and be with folk."

7. One of the fathers used to say, "Once when we were sitting and discussing love, Abba Joseph said, 'Do we know what love is?' and he told [this] about Abba Agathon: 'He possessed a small knife; a brother came to him and said, "You have a fine little knife." [Abba Agathon] would not let him go unless he took it.'" Agathon 25

8. Abba Agathon said, "I never went to bed with anything against anybody, and to the best of my ability I never let anybody go to bed who had anything against me." Agathon 4

9. Abba Isaiah said, "Love is conversation with God in unbroken thanksgiving, for God rejoices in thanksgiving; it is an indication of repose."

10. Once when Abba John was going up from Scete with other brothers, the one who was showing them the way went astray, and it was night. The brothers said to Abba John, "What will we do, Abba, for the guide has lost the way; maybe we will wander off and die?" The elder said to them, "If we tell him, he will be grieved and ashamed. But look, I will pretend to be sick and will say, 'I cannot travel [farther], so I am staying here until dawn,'" and so he did. The rest of them said, "Neither are we going on; we are staying with you." They stayed [there] until dawn and did not put the brother to shame. John Colobos 17

11. There was an elder in Egypt before the coming of those associated with Abba Poemen who was well-known and highly revered. When those associated with Abba Poemen came up from Scete, people abandoned the elder and came to Abba Poemen; the elder was jealous and spoke ill of them. Abba Poemen heard of it and was troubled. He said to his brothers, "What are we to do for this great elder? For folk have brought affliction upon us by leaving him and attaching themselves to us, Poemen 4

who are nothing. How could we heal him?" And he said to them, "Make a little food, get a measure of wine, and let us go to him and eat together; perhaps we will be able to heal him that way."

So they took up the victuals and went off. When they knocked at the gate, they heard his disciple saying, "Who are you?" and they said, "Tell the *abba*, 'It is Poemen wanting to be blessed by you.'" When the disciple reported this to the elder, he made it clear to them, saying, "Get away; I have no time [for you]," but they stayed [there, out] in the heat, saying, "We are not going away until we are deemed worthy [to be received] by the elder." Then, seeing their patience and humility, the elder was pricked in his conscience and opened the gate. In they went and ate with him. While they were eating, the elder began to say, "In truth, it is not just the things I have heard of you, for I have witnessed one hundred times as much in your deeds." He became their friend from that day on.

N 712 12. Abba Poemen said, "Do your utmost to do nobody any harm whatsoever; keep your heart pure with everybody."

Poemen 116 13. He also said, "There is no greater love than this: that somebody lays down his life for his neighbor [see John 15:13]. For if somebody hears a distressing word and is capable of uttering something like it himself but struggles to bear the pain and says nothing, or when someone is being browbeaten in a situation and bears the violence with the result that he does not pay back the one who caused him distress—such a person is laying down his soul for his neighbor."

Pambo 7 14. Abba Pambo was once travelling to the parts of Egypt with some brothers. When he saw some worldlings sitting there, he said to them, "Get up and embrace the brothers so you may be blessed, for they are continually speaking with God and their mouths are holy."

15. They used to say of Abba Paphnoutios that he rarely drank wine. Once when he was travelling, he came upon a band of robbers and found them drinking. Now the robber chief recognized him and was aware that he did not drink wine. But seeing him so exhausted, he filled the cup with wine and, taking his sword in hand, said to the elder, "I will kill you if you do not drink it." Now the elder knew that his own will was to fulfill the commandment of God, and, wanting to win [the robber chief] over, he took it and drank it. But the robber chief apologized to him, saying, "Forgive me, Abba. I have distressed you," and the elder said, "I have faith in God that on account of this cup he will have mercy on you in this world and in the next." Said the robber chief to him, "I have faith in God that from now on I will do no harm to anybody," and the elder won over the whole band by abandoning his will for the Lord's sake. Paphnoutius 7

16. Abba Hyperechios said, "To the best of your ability, deliver your neighbor from sins without disgrace, for God does not reject those who turn to him. Let no expression of evil or of craftiness dwell in your heart against your brother so that you can say, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'" [Matt 6:12]. Hyperechios

17. An ascetic saw somebody who was unable to fast because he was possessed by a demon. Moved by the love of God and seeking not his own advantage but the other's, he prayed that the demon should pass into his own self and that the other man be set free. God having granted this supplication, now it was the ascetic rather than the other whom the demon grievously afflicted, but he prolonged his fasts and so seriously applied himself to prayer and spiritual discipline that, within a few days, God finally expelled the demon from him in consequence of his charity. N 354

18. There were two brothers at The Cells; one of them was old, and he invited the younger, saying, "Let us live N 346

together, brother," but he said to him, "I am a sinner and cannot be with you, Abba." But he [still] invited him, saying, "Yes, we can [live together]." Now the elder was pure and did not want to hear of a monk having a *logismos* of *porneia*. The brother said to him, "Give me a week, and then we shall speak again."

So the elder came after the week, and wishing to put him to the test, the younger brother was saying to him, "I fell into great temptation this week, Abba. I fell with a woman when I went into the village on business." "Have you repented?" the elder said. "Yes, indeed I have," said the brother. "Then I shall assume responsibility for the half of your sin," he replied, to which the brother retorted, "Now we can be together," and live together they did, until their death.

N 345 19. One of the fathers said, "If a person demands something of you and constrains you to surrender it, let your mind acquiesce in making the gift, for it is written, 'Whosever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two' [Matt 5:41], meaning if someone asks you something, give it with all your heart."

N 347 20. They used to say of one brother that, having made some baskets, he was putting handles on them when he heard a brother who was his neighbor saying, "What am I to do, for market day is almost here, and I have no handles to put on my little baskets!" He went and detached the handles from his own baskets and brought them to the other brother, saying, "Look, I have these left over; take them and put them on your little baskets." He enhanced the brother's work to the detriment of his own.

N 348 21. They used to tell of an elder at Scete that he fell ill and wanted to eat a little fresh bread. When one of the brothers who was fighting the good fight there heard this, he took his sheepskin with some dried loaves in it and went off to Egypt. He traded them for small loaves and brought them to the elder. Folk were astounded at

the sight of the warm loaves, but the elder was reluctant to taste [them]. "It is my brother's blood," he said, but the elders entreated him, saying, "Eat, for the Lord's sake, or the brother's sacrifice will have been in vain." He began to eat when they entreated him like that.

22. A brother asked an elder, "There are two brothers; one of them lives a life of *hēsychia* in his cell, fasting six days in a row and giving himself a great deal of hard labor, while the other cares for a sick person. Whose work will be more acceptable to God?" The elder said, "Even if the one who fasts for six days were to hang himself up by his nostrils, he could not be the equal of the one who tends the sick." N 355

23. Somebody asked an elder, "How is it that nowadays there are those who labor each in his way of life but do not receive grace the way those of old time did?" "There was love in those times," the elder replied, "and each one promoted his neighbor. But now that love has grown cold, each one demotes his neighbor; that is why we do not receive grace." N 349

24. Three brothers once went away to [work on] the harvest; they took [responsibility for] sixty *arourai*.[1] One of them fell ill on the first day and went back to his cell. One of the remaining two said to the other one, "Look, our brother fell sick as you know; do you make a little effort with your *logismos*, and I will do likewise. Let us trust in God that, by his prayers, we will harvest his piece." N 350

When the work was done and they came to receive the remuneration, they called the brother, saying, "Come and get your remuneration, brother," but he said, "What remuneration do I have to get when I have not har-

[1] One *aroura* equals one hundred square cubits, or roughly 2000m^2 or a half acre; therefore, thirty *arourai* are approximately twelve hectares.

vested?" "Thanks to your prayers, we got the harvest in," they said. But the brother was reluctant, so they went to an elder to make a judgment. The brother said to him, "We three went harvesting. When I went into the field, on the first day I fell ill and returned to my cell. Not one day did I harvest, yet the brothers are coercing me, saying, 'Come and get the remuneration for which you have not labored.'"

The brothers said, "We three went to harvest and took responsibility for sixty *arourai*. Even if there had been three of us, it would have been with considerable effort that we would have completed the work; yet thanks to the prayers of the brother, we two quickly cleaned up the field. We are telling him to come and get his remuneration, but he does not want to take it."

The elder was amazed when he heard this. "Give the signal for all the brethren to come together," he instructed his disciple. When they arrived, he said, "Come, brothers. Listen today to a just judgment." The elder announced the whole matter to them, then sentenced the brother to receive his remuneration—and to do with it whatever he liked. The brother went away weeping and grieving.

N 351 25. An elder said, "Our fathers used to have the custom of visiting the cells of those brothers who, at the beginning of their career, wished to practice their discipline in solitude, and to inspect them in case any one of them, hounded by demons, might have become disturbed in the *logismos*. If anybody was ever found disturbed in this way, they would bring him into church. A bowl was set out, and prayer would be offered for the sick man. The brothers would all wash themselves and then pour some of the water over him. The brother would immediately be healed."

N 352 26. Two elders were staying with each other and never quarreled. Said the one to the other, "Let us quarrel the

way people do." In answer the other one said to him, "I don't know how a quarrel begins," but he said, "Look, I am putting a brick between us and saying it is mine; you are to say, 'No, it is mine,' and that is how it begins." They did so and one of them said, "That is mine," and the other one said, "No, it is mine," and the first one said in reply, "Yes indeed; take it and go," and off they went, finding nothing to quarrel with each other about.

27. A brother asked an elder, "When I see a brother whom I have heard has slipped up, I don't have the confidence to bring him into my cell; but if I see an excellent brother, I welcome him in." The elder said to him, "If you do a small favor to the excellent brother, do twice as much for the other because he is the one who is sick." Poemen 70a

28. An elder said, "I have never desired work that benefits me at my brother's expense, in the hope that my brother's work is a work that bears fruit." N 353

29. A brother was waiting on one of the fathers who was sick and whose body broke out and discharged in a malodorous suppuration. The brother's *logismos* said, "Get away, for you cannot bear the reek of this stench," but he took a pot and put in it the water with which he had washed the patient; then, whenever he was thirsty, he drank from it. His *logismos* began saying to him, "Do not either run away or drink that stinking stuff." He just went on toiling, drinking the water in which the patient was washed, and caring for the elder. When God saw the brother's toil, he changed the wash water into pure water and healed the elder. N 356

30. A brother asked an elder, "How can a man receive the grace of loving God?" In answer he said, "If someone sees his brother slipping up and calls on God for help on his behalf, then he acquires understanding of how one should love God." N 636

31. An elder said, "Let us acquire love, the summation of good things. Fasting is nothing, watching is nothing, and so is any other discipline if love is absent, for it is written, 'God is love'" [1 John 4:16].

32. The fathers used to say, "The devil can imitate everything. As for fasting, he never ate; as for watching, he never slept. But humble-mindedness and love he cannot imitate. So let there be a great effort on our part to have love within us and to hate pride, through which the devil fell out of heaven."

Nicētas 1

33. Abba Nicētas used to tell of two brothers who came across each other and wished to live together. One of them thought to himself, "Whatever my brother wants, I will do it." Likewise, the other one thought, "I will do the will of my brother." They lived like that for many years, very lovingly. But when the devil noted their great love, he could not endure it. He wanted to separate them, so he came and stood at the gate, appearing to one of them as a dove, to the other as a crow. Then one [brother] said to the other, "Do you see that dove?" and he said, "It is a crow, brother." They began to contend with each other, each saying something different. They rose up and fought, even to the shedding of blood, and were separated—to the utter delight of the enemy. After three days, they came to themselves and returned to their senses. They prostrated themselves to each other, each one confessing what he had thought in his heart: that they would each do the will of the other. Recognizing the aggression of the enemy, they remained together until death, very peacefully.

Serapion 1

34. One day Abba Serapion was passing through a village of Egypt when he saw a whore standing before her cell. He said to her, "Expect me this evening; I want to come and pass tonight with you." "Very well, Abba," she said in reply. She got herself ready, prepared the bed, and waited for the elder with what was needed.

When it was evening, the elder came into her cell empty-handed and said, "Did you get the bed ready?" "Yes, Abba," she said, and they closed the door with themselves alone [inside]. Then the elder said to her, "We have a rule; wait a little until I first fulfill it," and the elder began the *synaxis*. Beginning with the Psalter, he offered a prayer [after] each psalm, beseeching God on her behalf, that she might repent and be saved. So God heard him, for the woman was standing near to the elder, trembling and praying. The woman fell to the ground when he finished the psalms. The elder began the [writings of the] Apostle and recited a large extract and so completed the *synaxis*.

The woman was pricked in her conscience; she realized that it was not to sin that he came to her, but to save her. She fell down before him, saying, "Of your charity, take me to wherever I can be well pleasing to God." Then the elder took her to a monastery for virgins and handed her over to the *amma*, saying, "Receive this sister but do not impose a yoke or a commandment on her as [you do] on the other sisters; rather, give her whatever she wants and let her go where she wishes."

When she had been [there] a few days, she said, "I am a sinner; I want to eat once a day." Then after a few days she also begged the *amma* of the monastery, "Since I gravely saddened God with my sins, of your charity, put me in a cell, seal it up, and give me a little food and some work to do through a hole." The *amma* acceded [to her request] and did so for her, and in this way she was well pleasing to God for the remaining time of her life.

35. An elder used to say that one of the fathers said, "A sparse and regular diet yoked with love rapidly brings the one who has acquired that rule to the haven of *apatheia*."

Evagrius 6; see 1.4

18

Those Who Have Second Sight [*Dioratikoi*]

Antony 24

1. It was once revealed to Abba Antony in the desert, "There is somebody in the city like you, a physician by profession, who provides those in need with his superfluous income and is singing the *trisagion*[1] with the angels of God all day long."

Arsenius 27

2. A brother went to the cell of Abba Arsenius at Scete and, looking through the window, saw the elder as though he were all fire, for the brother was worthy to see [him]. When he knocked, the elder came out and saw the brother astounded. "Have you been knocking for long?" he said to him. "Did you see anything?" But [the brother] said, "No." [The elder] conversed with him and sent him on his way.

Arsenius 33

3. As though he were speaking of somebody else (but it may well have been him), the disciple of Abba Arsenius said that while one of the elders was residing in his own cell, a voice came to him that said, "Come, I will show you the works of folk"; he got up and went. [The voice] brought him to a place and showed him a burnt-faced one cutting wood and making a great bundle. He attempted to carry it but could not. But instead of taking away from it, he went and cut more wood, adding it to the bundle; and he did this for some time. When they had gone a little farther, he also showed him a person standing in a lake, drawing water from it, and pouring

[1] "Thrice holy," the *sanctus* sung by the seraphim in Isa 6:3.

[the water] into a receptacle with holes in it; the water was running out into the lake. He spoke to him again, "Come on, I will show you something else," and here he saw two persons mounted on horses carrying a piece of wood crossways, one beside the other. They were wanting to enter through the gate but could not because the piece of wood was crossways. One would not humble himself [by going] behind the other so that they could bring the piece of wood in lengthwise; for that reason they remained outside the gate. He said to him, "These are they who bear the yoke of righteousness with pride and are not humbled to put their house in order and to travel the humble way of Christ; so they remain outside the kingdom of God. The fellow cutting wood has many sins; instead of repenting, he adds other transgressions on top of his own transgressions. And the one drawing water is a person who does good works, but because he was mixing evil ones with them, he lost his good ones too. So must everyone watch over his works, lest he toil in vain."

Daniel 7

4. Abba Daniel also related what our father Abba Arsenius said about a Scetiote: that he was a great one in deeds but a simpleton in belief. He erred in his ignorance, saying that the bread shared in Communion is not really the body of Christ but a representation.

Two elders heard that he made this statement; aware that he was a great one in the way he lived, they reckoned that he spoke without guile and in simplicity. They went to him and said, "Abba, we have heard it said of a faithless fellow that he says the bread we share in Communion is not really the body of Christ but a representation." The elder said, "It is I who say that." They begged of him, saying, "Do not maintain that position, Abba, but [the one] that the catholic church has handed down. For we believe that the bread itself is the body of Christ and the chalice itself is truly the blood of Christ and no representation. Just as in the beginning [God] took clay

from the earth and made the human being in his own image [Gen 2:7; 1:27], and nobody can say that it was not in the image of God, albeit incomprehensible, so too the bread that he said 'is my body' [Matt 26:26 and parallels] we believe truly to be the body of Christ." The elder said, "Unless I am swayed by experience, I will not be convinced." They said to him, "Let us pray to God about this mystery during this week, and we believe that God will reveal it to us." The elder accepted the proposition with joy; he prayed to God, saying, "Lord, you know that it is not in malice that I do not believe; reveal it to me, Lord Jesus Christ, so that I do not wander away from the truth." The elders went off to their own cells and besought God, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, reveal this mystery to the elder so that he believes and does not lose his toil," and God heard them both.

When the week was over, they came to the church on Sunday; the three solitaries sat on one cushion, with the elder in the center. Their inner eyes were opened, and when the bread was placed on the table, it appeared to the three solitaries as a child. When the priest put forth [his hand] to break the bread, here there came down from heaven an angel of the Lord; he had a sword and he slew the child, emptying its blood into the chalice. When the priest broke the bread into small pieces, the angel cut the child into small pieces too. When they went to receive the holy mysteries, there was given to the elder solitary bleeding flesh. He was terrified when he saw it and cried out, saying, "Lord, I believe that the bread is your body and the chalice is your blood." Immediately the meat in his hand became bread, as in the sacrament, and he partook of it, giving thanks to God. The elders said, "God knows that human nature is such that one cannot eat raw flesh, and for that reason he transformed his body into bread and his blood into wine for those who partake in faith." They gave thanks to God for not allowing the elder to lose his toil; the three of them went to their own cells with joy.

Daniel 8

5. The same Abba Daniel made it known that another great elder living in lower Egypt used to say in his simplicity that it is Melchizedek who is the Son of God. This was reported to Cyril, archbishop of Alexandria [412–444], who sent for him. [Cyril] was aware that the elder was a wonder worker, that whatever he asked of God was revealed to him, and that it was in simplicity that he made the statement [about Melchizedek]. [Cyril] shrewdly said to him, "Abba, I have a request: my *logismos* tells me that it is Melchizedek who is the Son of God, while another *logismos* says he is not [the Son of God] but a man and a high priest of God. Since I am in two minds on this matter, I have sent for you so that you can pray to God so that he can reveal [the solution] to you and we might know the truth." Trusting in his own way of life, [the elder] confidently replied, "Allow me three days, and I will proclaim to you which is [the right answer]." Off he went and interceded with God concerning this matter.

Three days later the elder came and told the blessed Cyril that Melchizedek was a man. The archbishop said to him, "How do you know, Abba?" He said, "God showed me all the patriarchs passing before me, one by one, from Adam to Melchizedek; an angel said to me, 'This is Melchizedek; make no mistake that this is how he is.'" The elder went away and, of his own free will, announced that Melchizedek was a man. The blessed Cyril greatly rejoiced.

Ephraim 1

6. When the blessed Ephraim was a child, he had a dream or a vision: a vine sprung up from his tongue, grew, and filled all the space under heaven, and it was very fruitful. All the birds of the air were eating of the fruit of the vine, and while they were eating, the fruit was proliferating.

Ephraim 2

7. One of the saints also saw vision of ranks of angels coming out of heaven by the order of God with a

scroll in their hands, meaning a book written on both sides. They were saying to each other, "Who ought to undertake this?" Some were saying so-and-so, others such a one, but in reply they said, "They are truly holy and righteous, but they cannot undertake this." They uttered many other names of holy ones and finally said, "Nobody can undertake this other than Ephraim." The elder who had the vision saw that they gave the scroll to Ephraim. Rising early, he heard Ephraim teaching, and there was the like of a spring flowing from his mouth; the elder who had the vision realized that what came out of the lips of Ephraim was coming from the Holy Spirit.

Zēno 5

8. They used to say of Abba Zēno that when he was staying at Scete he came out of his cell one night meaning to go to the marsh, but he lost his way; he spent three days and three nights walking around. Exhausted and worn out, he fell down to die, and here there was a youth standing beside him with bread and a bottle of water. "Get up and eat," he said to him. Up he got and began praying, under the impression that it was a vision, but in response the other said to him, "Well done," so he prayed again a second time and likewise a third, and [the youth] said to him, "Well done," so he got up, took [the bread and water], and ate, and [the youth] said to him, "The more you walked around, the farther you got from your cell, but get up and follow me." Immediately he found himself at his cell, so the elder said to him, "Come in and offer a prayer for us." When the elder went in, the other disappeared.

Ischyriōn 1

9. The holy fathers of Scete predicted concerning the last generation, saying, "What have we accomplished?" In reply one of them, great in life, Ischyriōn by name, said, "We have kept the commandments of God." In reply the elders said, "But those who come after us, what will they accomplish?" He said, "They are going to attain the half of what we have done." They said, "And

what of those after them?" and he said, "Those of that generation will have nothing to do at all. Temptation is going to come upon them, and those who are found to be tried and tested in that temptation will be found to be greater than us and than our fathers."

John Colobos 14

10. John Colobos said, "I saw one of the elders in a trance, and here there were three elders standing on the other shore of the sea. A voice came to them from the other shore, saying, 'Take wings of fire and come to me.' Two of them took [wings] and flew to the other shore, but the other remained [there], weeping and crying out. Wings were eventually given to him, not of fire but feeble and weak. He got to the other side, being thrown into the sea as he toiled and getting up out of it with great difficulty. So it is with this generation: if it receives wings, they will still not be of fire; it will scarcely receive feeble and weak ones."

N 709

11. They used to say of Abba Longinus that once upon a time a shipmaster brought him some gold from plying his vessels and offered it to him. The *abba* was unwilling to receive it and said to him, "There is no need of such as this here, but, of your charity, mount your beast and go in all haste to Saint Peter's Stairs. You will find a young man there wearing such and such clothes. Give him all the gold and ask him what is the matter with him." The shipmaster took off without delay and found [the young man] just as the elder had told him. He asked him, "Where do you come from, brother? I was with Abba Longinus, and he sent me to you to give you this gold." Then the young man told him of his trouble: "I am up to my eyes in debt, and since I am not a man of substance, I have come out to hang myself outside the city. If you do not believe me, here is the rope I am carrying," and he took it out of his cloak and showed it to him. The shipmaster gave him the gold and prevailed on him to go back into the city. He [himself] returned to Abba Longinus and told him the

affair. The elder said to him, "Believe me, brother, if you had not moved quickly and got to him, both you and I would have had to stand trial for his soul."

N 710

12. Another time, too, when [Abba Longinus] was sitting in his own cell with some fathers who were visiting him, he suddenly got up and, without a word to anyone, left the cell and hastened down to the shore. As he drew near to the shore, a boat coming from Egypt put in. On board was a holy elder who wished to visit him. They greeted each other with a holy kiss and then stood in prayer. The Egyptian said to God, "Lord, I have asked you that my circumstances not be revealed to the elder and that he not be inconvenienced." They went into Abba Longinus's cell, and next morning the Egyptian elder died.

Macarius the Egyptian 3

13. Abba Macarius was living in retreat all alone in the remote desert. Lower down there was another desert where there were several brothers. The elder looked carefully at the trail and saw Satan coming disguised as a human, intending to pass him by. He seemed to be wearing a linen garment with holes, and a little flask was hanging out of each hole. The elder said to him, "Where are you going?" and he said, "I am going to jog the memories of the brothers." The elder said, "And what are these little flasks?" He said, "I am bringing victuals for the brothers." The elder said, "All of these?" "Yes," he replied, "and if one does not please, I offer another; if not that one either, I give another. There certainly is one of them that will please him," and having said that, off he went.

The elder stayed there keeping watch on the trails. When he saw [Satan] coming back again, he said to him, "Greetings, greetings!" but he replied, "What greetings for me?" The elder said to him, "How so?" and he said, "They were all savage with me, and no one received me." The elder said, "You have not one friend there?" He said, "Oh yes, I have one brother there, and he obeys me and spins around like a weathercock when he sees

me." The elder said, "What is the brother called?" "Theopemptos," he said, and so saying, off he went.

Abba Macarius got up and went into the lower desert. When the brothers who were collecting palm branches heard, they came out to meet him. Each one made preparations thinking that the elder would break his fast with him; but he began to inquire who on the mountain was the one called Theopemptos, and having found him, he went into his cell, Theopemptos gladly receiving him. When they were alone, the elder said to him, "How are things with you, brother?" "So far, so good," he said, for he was embarrassed to speak out. The elder said, "Look, I have been all these years in the ascetic life, revered by all, and, elder that I am, the spirit of *porneia* disturbs me." Then the brother replied, "Believe me, Abba, me too!" The elder made out that other *logismoi* disturbed him until he persuaded [the brother] to confess. Then he said to him, "How do you fast?" "Until the ninth [hour]," he said. The elder told him, "Fast until evening; discipline yourself and recite by heart the Gospel and the other Scriptures. If an evil *logismos* comes upon you, do not ever look down but always look up, and the Lord will immediately help you."

When he had firmly grounded the brother, the elder went out into the remote desert, and as he looked out, he saw that demon again and said to him, "Where are you going to?" "Going to jog the brethren," he said. When he came back again, the elder said to him, "So, how are the brothers?" and he said, "Not good." "How is that?" the elder said, and he said, "Because they are *all* savage with me. The worst of it is that the one friend I used to have and who would listen to me has been turned around, but I don't know how. Not only does he not obey me, he has also become the most savage of them all. I swore I would never set foot there again in many a year." That said, he went his way and left the elder; that holy man went into his cell.

N 66 14. They used to say of Abba Macarius that once when he was going to church at The Cells to offer the *synaxis*, he saw a host of demons outside one of the brothers' cells. Some of them were transformed into women uttering indecencies; some were as young men making injurious remarks; some were dancing; some had assumed various appearances. Now the elder had the second sight; he sighed, saying, "Indeed, this brother is living neglectfully, and that is why the evil spirits are crowding around his cell in this disorderly manner."

When the *synaxis* was completed, on his way back he went into that brother's cell and said to him, "Brother, I am distressed because I am neglectful; but I have confidence in you, that God will altogether relieve my heart of my *logismoi* if you will pray for me." The brother prostrated himself before the elder, saying, "Father, I am not worthy to pray for you." But the elder persisted, begging the brother and saying, "I am not going away until you give me your word that you will offer one prayer for me each night," so the brother yielded to the elder's entreaty. Now the elder did this in order to provide the brother with a basic reason for praying at night. So the brother got up during the night and offered the prayer for the elder. On completing the prayer, he was pricked in his conscience. "Oh wretched soul," he said to himself. "Did you pray for the elder without offering a prayer for yourself?" So he offered one urgent prayer for himself. He did likewise during the week, offering two prayers each night: one for the elder and one for himself.

Now on Sunday, as the elder was going to church, again he saw the demons standing outside the brother's cell, but [they were] somewhat downcast; the elder realized that the demons were downcast because the brother was praying. Joyful now, he went in to him and said to him, "Of your charity, add one more prayer each night." Having offered the two prayers for the elder, the brother was again pricked in his conscience. "O miserable fel-

low," he said to himself, "add one more prayer for your own self," and that is how he passed *that* whole week, completing four prayers each night.

When the elder came again, he saw the demons downcast and reduced to silence. Giving thanks to God, he went in to the brother and entreated him to add yet another prayer on his behalf. The brother added one more prayer for himself too; he was now offering six prayers each night. When the elder came to the brother again, the demons raged against the elder and abused him, angered at the salvation of the brother. But Abba Macarius glorified God at the brother's progress and, entering his cell again, urged him not to be neglectful but "to pray without ceasing" [1 Thess 5:17]; then he left him. When the demons saw the persistence he exercised in prayer, by the grace of God, they went away from him.

Macarius the Egyptian 6

15. Wishing to encourage the brothers, Abba Macarius would say, "A child possessed of a demon once came here with his mother, and he was saying to his mother, 'Get up, let us be gone!' 'I am unable to walk,' she said, and he to her, 'I shall carry you.' I was amazed at the knavery of the demon, how he wanted to drive them away."

Macarius the Egyptian 5

16. Concerning the desolation of Scete, he would say to the brothers, "When you see a cell built near to the marsh, know that its desolation is near. When you see trees, it is at the door. When you see children, take your sheepskins and get away."

Moses 1

17. There was a time when Abba Moses of Petra was terribly embattled by *porneia*. When he could remain in his cell no longer, he went and revealed it to Abba Isidore. The elder invited him to return to his cell, but he would not accept that, saying, "Abba, I cannot." So he took him and brought him up onto the housetop with him and

said to him, "Look to the west." He looked and saw a multitude of demons; they were milling around together and shouting, ready for battle. Then Abba Isidore also said to him, "Look to the east." He looked and saw an innumerable host of glorious angels. Then Abba Isidore [said] to him, "Look, these are they who are sent to the holy ones by the Lord to help them; they in the west are the ones who are fighting against them. They who are on our side are the more numerous." When he had given thanks to God, Abba Moses took courage from this [experience] and returned to his own cell.

Moses 9–10

18. Abba Moses used to say at Scete, "If we keep the commandments of our fathers, I warrant you in God's name that the barbarians will not come here. If we do not keep [them], this place will be devastated." Once when the brothers were sitting with him, he said to them, "Here are the barbarians coming to Scete today; but get up and get away!" They said to him, "And you, Abba, are you not running away?" He said to them, "I have been waiting so many years for this day so that the saying of my Lord and master Christ might be fulfilled: 'All who take the sword shall be lost by the sword'" [Matt 26:52]. They said to him, "Neither will we run away; we will die with you," but he said to them, "I have nothing to do with that; let each one decide for himself." There were seven brothers, and he said to them, "Here are the barbarians getting near to the gate." In they came and killed them, but one of them was [so] afraid he ran away behind some cords; he saw seven crowns descending and crowning them.

N 567

19. Some of the fathers used to say about Abba Marcellinus of the Thebaid that his disciple often said that when he was going to set out for the *synaxis* on a Sunday, he would prepare himself and repeat from memory a passage from the Scriptures until he came to the church. As he meditated in this way, his lips did not move so that

nobody might hear him. And when he was standing at the *synaxis*, his breast was being sprinkled with tears. He used to say, "While the *synaxis* is in progress, I perceive the entire church like fire, and when the church is dismissed, the fire recedes again."

Mark the disciple of Silvanus 5

20. They used to say of Abba Silvanus that there came a time when he wanted to go into Syria. His disciple, Abba Mark, said to him, "Father, I do not want to go away from here right now, but neither will I let you go away, Abba. Wait here another three days," and on the third day he fell asleep in peace.

Poemen 183

21. Abba John who was exiled by [the emperor] Marcian used to say, "Coming from Syria, we once visited Abba Poemen, and we wanted to ask him about hardness of heart. The elder did not speak Greek, and there was no interpreter to hand. Perceiving our dismay, the elder began speaking in the Greek tongue, saying, 'The nature of water is soft, that of rock is hard, but a [dripping] vessel hung above a rock pierces the rock, little by little. Likewise, the word of God is soft, but our heart is hard. When one often hears the Word of God, his heart is opened to fear God.'"

Poemen 30

22. Abba Poemen said, "It is written, 'Like the hart desires the springs of water, so longs my soul after you, O Lord' [Ps 41:2]. Because the harts in the wilderness consume many serpents and the poison burns them, they long to come to the waters on the mountain. They drink and are refreshed from the poison of the serpents. Likewise are the monks living in the wilderness burned by the poison of the wicked demons and longing to come to the springs of water on Saturday and Sunday, to the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is, so they can be cleansed of all the bitterness of the evil one."

Poemen 34

23. A brother asked the same Abba Poemen, "What is the meaning of 'Never repay evil with evil'?" [cf. Rom

12:17]. Abba Poemen said to him, "This passion works in four ways: first, in the heart; second, in the sight; third, in the tongue; fourth, in doing evil in response to evil. If you can purge your heart, it does not come into sight. If it comes into sight, take care not to speak of it. If you do speak of it, quickly prevent yourself from rendering evil for evil."

HL 34[2] 24. In this monastery [of the Tabennesiōtes] there was another virgin who pretended to be insane and [possessed of] a demon. They loathed her so much that they would not eat with her, and that was what she wanted. Wandering around the kitchen, she used to do all sorts of work, and she was the sponge of the monastery, as they say, fulfilling by her behavior that which is written, "If anyone among you seems to be wise in this world, let that one become a fool in order to be wise" [1 Cor 3:18]. She had bound a rag round her head (all the others were shorn and wore hoods), and that was how she served. Not one of the four hundred [sisters] ever saw her eating during the years of her life; she did not sit at table, nor did she receive a piece of bread. She just sponged up the crumbs from the tables and washed the pots; that sufficed for her. She never insulted anybody, never complained, never spoke a little or at length, yet she was punched and insulted, cursed and loathed.

An angel came to the holy Piteroum, a tried and tested anchorite living at Porphyrites, and said to him, "Why do you have such a high opinion of yourself for being pious and living in such a place? Do you want to see a woman who is more devout than you? Go to the monastery of the Tabennesiōtes, and there you shall

[2] *APsys* gives only a Latin translation of *HL* 34, which begins, "Basil, the holy bishop, related how there was a maiden in a women's monastery." We here translate from the critical edition of the Greek text of G. J. M. Barterlink, *Palladio: La Storia Lausiaca* (Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1974), 162–66.

find one wearing a diadem on her head; she is better than you, for in competition with such a multitude she never separated her heart from God—while you remain here, wandering over cities in your mind." And he who never went out came to that monastery and requested permission of the tutors to enter the women's monastery.

Given his renown and his great age, they were happy to bring him in. When he came in, he requested to see them all; she did not appear. Finally he said to them, "Bring them all to me, for there is one missing." They said to him, "We have one who is insane in the kitchen" (that is how they call the suffering ones). He said to them, "Bring her to me too; let me see her." They went to call her, but she would not obey; perhaps she discerned the situation or had it revealed to her. They forced her to come, saying to her, "Holy Piteroum wants to see you," for he was renowned. When she came, he saw the rag on her brow, and falling at her feet, he said to her, "Bless me." She likewise fell at his feet and said to him, "Do you bless me, sir." They were all astounded and said to him, "Do not be offended, Abba—she is insane." Piteroum said to them all, "It is you who are insane; this one is our *amma*" (that is what they call spiritual women), "and I pray to be found worthy of her on Judgment Day."

On hearing this, they fell at his feet, all confessing different things: one that she had poured the washbowl on her, one that she had punched her, one that she had rubbed her nose in mustard. In a word, they all confessed various offenses. When he had prayed for them, he went his way. After a few day, unable to tolerate the esteem and respect of the sisters and weighed down by their explanations, she went out of the monastery. Where she went, where she stayed, or how she died, nobody knew.

25. They used to tell about Abba Pachomius that the corpse of a dead person was being carried out along the road and when Abba Pachomius met it he saw two angels

following the dead man behind the stretcher. When he had thought about them, be begged God to reveal to him what had happened. The two angels came to him, and he said to them, "Why are you, who are angels, following the dead man?" The angels said to him, "One of us is of Wednesday, one of Friday, and until he died, this soul never desisted from fasting on Wednesday and Friday. For that reason we have followed his corpse. Because he observed the fast until his death, we have glorified him as one who struggled in the Lord."

Paul the Simple 1

26. The blessed Abba Paul the Simple, the disciple of Abba Antony, told the fathers something like this: that once when he was in a monastery for a visit and for the benefit of the brothers, after the usual conversation they went into the holy church of God and offered the customary *synaxis*. Blessed Paul (he said) carefully observed each one of those going into the church [to see] in what spiritual state they were going in. For he had this grace given to him by God: to see the state of each person's soul as we see one another's faces. All were going in with shining faces and a sparkling look, the angel of each one rejoicing on their account. "But I saw one," he said, "whose body was all shady and black, with a demon on either side retaining him with a halter through the nostrils, pushing and pulling him to them. His holy angel was following at a distance, dismayed and distressed."

Paul was sitting before the church, weeping, and beating his breast many times with his hand, greatly lamenting what had appeared to him in this way. Those who witnessed the fellow's rapid transformation to tears and weeping were themselves moved, and they inquired of him, begging him to reveal what he had seen, for they feared that his behavior was a condemnation of everybody. They invited him to go in to the *synaxis* with them, but he shook them off and declined. He sat

outside in silence, severely regretting the one who had been shown to him like that.

Not long afterward, everybody was dismissed and coming out of the church; again Paul examined each one. He knew what they were like when they went in and wanted to know how they were coming out. Among them he saw the one whose body was all shady and black [now] coming out of the church again with a shiny face and a white body, the demons following a long way off while the holy angel stayed close to him, joyful, eager, and rejoicing on his charge's behalf. Paul sprang up with joy and shouted out, blessing God and saying, "Ah, the unspeakable love of humankind and goodness of God! Ah, his divine mercies and immeasurable kindness!" At a run, he mounted some high steps and said with a loud voice, "'Come and behold the works of God' [Ps 45:9a], how they are fearful and full of all admiration. Come and see him 'who wishes all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth' [1 Tim 2:4]. 'Come, let us worship and fall down before him' [Ps 94:6], and let us say, 'you alone can forgive sins.'"

They all came running together, wanting to know what was being said. When they were all assembled, Paul told them what had been seen by him before they went in to the church and again afterward, and he asked that person to say why God had granted him such a transformation. Encouraged by Paul, the person told his story without dissimulation. "I am a sinful person," he said, "living in *porneia* for a long time until now. When I went into the holy church of God just now, I heard the prophet Isaiah being read, or rather God speaking in him: 'Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil. Learn to do well; seek judgment. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; and if you be willing and obedient to me, you shall eat the good of the land' [Isa 1:16-19, *partim*].

And I," he said, "the unchaste, was severely pricked in my conscience by that passage; I called out to God and said to God in my inner self, 'You are the God who came into the world to save sinners [see 1 Tim 1:15]. Do you now accomplish in deed on me that which you were just now announcing through your prophet. For look, from now on I give you [my] word; I guarantee and promise in my heart that I will not do any such evil. I will reject all iniquity and serve you from now on with a pure conscience. Today, then, Lord-and-master, from this very hour, receive me who repent and fall before you and distance myself from every sin.' On [making] these promises," he said, "I came out of the church determined within myself never again to commit anything that is foul before the eyes of God." All those who were hearing began to cry out to God with a loud voice, saying, "'Lord, how wondrous are your works; in wisdom have you made them all'!" [Ps 103:24].

Since we, oh Christians, are aware from the divine Scriptures and the divine revelations what goodness God has for those who sincerely fly to him and turn away from their former misdoings by repentance and that he gives them back again the promised good things, let us not despair of our salvation. Just as he promised through the prophet Isaiah to wash those bogged down in sin like wool and make them white a snow, so too does he also through the prophet Ezekiel exhort us with an oath not to destroy [ourselves]: "As I live, says the Lord, I do not wish the death of a sinner but that he might turn about and live" [Ezek 18:32; 33:11].

Silvanus 3

27. Zachariah, the disciple of Abba Silvanus, once came in and found him in a trance, his hand stretched out to heaven; he closed the door and went out. Coming in at the sixth and the ninth hours, he found him the same. He knocked and went in about the eleventh hour and found him resting. "What was the matter today?" he said to him, and the elder said, "I was a little unwell, my

son." However, he grasped [the elder's] feet and began to say, "I will not release you unless you tell me what you saw." "I was snatched away into heaven," the elder said to him, "and I saw the glory of God; and there I stood until now. Now I am let go."

28. Holy Synklētikē said, "Let us become 'wise as serpents and harmless as doves' [Matt 10:17], engaging a crafty *logismos* against his snare. To be 'wise as serpents' is said [to warn] us not to forget the assaults and techniques of the devil (for like quickly acquires a knowledge of like); 'harmless as doves' indicates the purity of the action." Synklētikē 18

29. One of the fathers used to say that once when some fathers were sitting and speaking of what is beneficial [for the soul], there was one among them who had second sight, and he could see angels nodding in approval and praising them. But the angels withdrew when the conversation turned to other matters. Then there were stinking pigs wandering around among them and putting them out of sight. But when the conversation returned to what is beneficial [for the soul], the angels came back and went on praising them. N 359

30. An elder said, "This is the meaning of the passage in Scripture, 'I will turn [my wrath] away for two or three transgressions of Tyr, but for four I will not turn [it] away' [Amos 1:9]: [the three faults are] to imagine evil, to consent to it in one's *logismos*, and to speak [of it]; the fourth [stage] is to accomplish the deed. From this [the wrath] is not turned away, says the Lord."[3] N 360

31. They used to say of a great elder at Scete that when the brothers were building a cell, he would go out with joy to lay the foundations and would not leave until N 361

[3] The words in brackets are found in *APanon* (Coislin 126) but not in *APsys*. The passage makes little sense without them.

the work was completed. But he was very sad one time when he went out to the construction of a cell. The brothers said to him, "Why are you sad and depressed, Abba?" "This place is going to be laid waste, children," he said, "for I saw that a fire had been ignited at Scete. The brothers took palm fronds and beat it out. It reignited and again the brothers beat it out with fronds. It broke out a third time, spreading to the whole of Scete, and they were no longer able to suppress it. That is why I am sad and depressed."

N 68 32. One of the fathers related how while the clergy were offering [the Eucharist] at Scete, the likeness of an eagle used to descend on the offering and nobody but the clergy would see it. One day a brother asked the deacon for something, and he said to him, "I don't have time just now." When they went for the offering, the likeness of an eagle did not descend as usual, and the priest said to the deacon, "What is going on that the eagle did not present itself as usual?" and he said to the deacon, "The fault is either in me or in you. Stand aside a little, and if it descends, it will be known that it is on your account that it did not come down. If not, it is evident that that it was because of me that it did not descend." When the deacon stood aside, the eagle promptly descended, and when the *synaxis* was finished, the priest said to the deacon, "Tell me what you did." "I am not aware of having sinned myself," the deacon assured him, "unless it is that when a brother came asking me for such and such, I answered him saying that I did not have time." The priest to him, "So it was on your account that the eagle did not descend, undoubtedly because you distressed the brother," and the deacon went and apologized to the brother.

N 362 33. An elder said, "It is written, 'The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree' [Ps 91:13]. The saying indicates the loftiness, the uprightness, and the sweetness of good

deeds. And the palm tree has a single heart; it is white and is the source of the tree's entire activity. Something similar is to be found in the righteous man: his heart is single and uncomplicated, looking to God alone. It is white, suffused by the light of faith, and the entire activity of the righteous man is located in his heart. The sharpness of its thorns is protection against the devil."

34. An elder said, "The Shunamite woman took in Elisha, [and she conceived and bore a child thanks to the coming of Elisha[4]] despite the fact that she had no relations with any of the men [see 2 Kgs 4:8-37]. It is said that the Shunamite woman represents the soul, Elisha the Holy Spirit. At whatever time the soul withdraws from the disturbance and trouble of the world, the Spirit of God comes upon it, at which point it is enabled to bear fruit even though it is widowed." N 363; Cronios 1

35. Another of the fathers said, "The eyes of a pig have a natural tendency to turn toward the ground and can never look up to the sky. It is the same," he said, "for the soul of those who are addicted to pleasure. Once it has slipped into the quagmire of enjoyment, it is difficult for it to be able to raise its eyes to God or to pay attention to what is worthy of God." N 364

36. There was a great [elder] among those who possessed the second sight who made this affirmation: "The force whose presence I beheld in a moment of illumination—that force I also saw on the clothing of a monk when he received the habit." N 365

37. Another of the elders used to say, "I often saw the Holy Spirit at the mouths of the brothers when the deacon said, 'Greet each other . . . .'"[5] N 87

[4] The phrase in the brackets, necessary to make sense of the saying, is found in *APalph* but not in *APsys* or in *APanon*.

[5] That is, at the kiss of peace in the Holy Eucharist.

N 366 38. An elder was enlightened to be able to see what was happening, and he said, "I once saw a brother in a *coenobion* meditating in a cell. A demon came and stood outside the door of the cell. He was unable to enter while the brother was meditating; but when he stopped meditating, then the demon went into the cell."

N 369 39. They used to say of one elder that he besought God to let him see the demons, and it was revealed to him, "You do not need to see them." But the elder begged, saying, "Lord, you are able to protect me by your grace," and God uncovered his eyes, and he saw them like bees swarming around a man, gnashing their teeth against him, but the angels of God were rebuking them.

N 367 40. An elder said that there were two brothers who were his neighbors: one a foreigner, the other a native. The foreigner was somewhat slack, the native very zealous. It came about that the foreigner died; the elder (who had the second sight) beheld a host of angels accompanying his soul. When he arrived at the point of entering heaven, an inquiry was made about him, and there came a voice from on high, saying, "It is clear that he was somewhat slack, but open up to him on account of his alienation."[6] Later on the native one died; all his family arrived, but the elder saw there were no angels anywhere. He was amazed, and he fell on his face before God, saying, "How is it that the stranger who was slack was accorded such glory, while this zealous brother gets nothing of the kind?" A voice came to him that said, "When this zealous brother was at the point of death, he opened his eyes and saw his parents weeping, and his soul was comforted. But the alien, even if he was slack, saw none of his own people. He wept and sighed—and God comforted him."

[6] *Xeniteia* (*perigrinatio* in Latin); see Matt 10:37; 19:29; and parallels.

41. One of the fathers told how there was an anchorite in the desert of Nileopolis and a faithful worldling used to wait upon him. Now in the city there was a rich man who was godless, and it came about that he died. The whole city and the bishop formed a procession with lights for him. The anchorite's serving man, going out as usual to bring him bread, found that he had been eaten by a hyena. He fell on his face before the Lord, saying, "I will not get up until you convince me why it is that that godless fellow had such a parade while this person who was serving you day and night suffered like this." An angel of the Lord came to him and said, "That godless fellow did a little good here and received his reward here so that he will find no rest at all there. But this anchorite, a man distinguished in every virtue, nevertheless—being human—committed a few faults. He paid the penalty for them in this world so that he might be found spotless before God in the next one." On receiving this assurance, he went his way glorifying God for his judgments, for these are true [see Ps 18:10]. N 368

42. One of the fathers explained that there are three things [so] precious for monks that we should approach them with fear, trembling, and spiritual joy: the communion of the holy mysteries, the brothers' table, and the washing of their feet. He adduced an example like this: "There was a great elder who had the second sight, and he happened to be eating with several brothers. While they were eating, the elder became spiritually attentive as he was sitting at table and began to see some of them eating honey, some bread, some excrement. Amazed in his own mind, he interceded with God, saying, 'Lord, reveal this mystery to me, how the same victuals put out on the table for all appear to be transformed like this in the eating; some are eating honey, some bread, and others excrement.' A voice from above came to him, saying, 'Those who are eating honey are they who sit at table with fear and trembling and spiritual joy and are N 85

praying without ceasing [see 1 Thess 5:17]. Their prayer comes up before God like incense; that is why they are eating honey. Those who are eating bread are they who give thanks on partaking of the gifts of God, while they who are eating excrement are the ones who grumble, saying, "This is good and that is rotten." One should not take those things into account but rather glorify God and offer up hymns to the Almighty in order that among us also the saying might be fulfilled: "Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God"'" [1 Cor 10:31].

43. Some monks came out of their cells, congregated in one place, and started discussing ascetic practice, devotion, and how one should please God. While these things were being discussed, two angels appeared to some elders among them. They had stoles and were blessing each one of those who were speaking about [spiritual] benefit. Those to whom the vision was revealed kept silent and said nothing. Next day they congregated in the same place; the discussion turned to how a certain brother had sinned, and they began to defame him. Then there appeared to the same elders a stinking and altogether filthy pig. Recognizing the fault, they to whom the vision was revealed told the brothers of the angels' blessing and about the vision of the pig.

N 389 44. The elders used to say that each one ought to assume responsibility for how his neighbor is, almost putting him on with his body and wearing the whole man, suffering with him in all situations, and weeping and rejoicing with him too. One simply [ought] to be disposed in that way because one is wearing the same body and has the same face and the same soul. When some trial comes upon [his neighbor], he feels as though he is being afflicted himself. This is in accordance with that which is written, "We are a single body in Christ" [Rom 12:5], and "The multitude of the believers had

but one heart and a single soul" [Acts 4:32], and that is what the holy kiss makes clear.

45. An elder recounted, "There was a very aged virgin advanced in the fear of God, and when she was asked by me about how she came to withdraw [from the world], she sighed and began to speak like this: 'Oh wondrous fellow, it fell to me to be the child of a father who was of a kind and gentle disposition but weak and sickly of body. He lived so preoccupied with himself that he hardly ever came into contact with those living in the area. He remained on his land and passed his life there; if ever he was well, he would bring the fruits [of the earth] into the house, but for the most part he was confined to bed, nursing a disease. Such was his silence that he seemed to have no voice to those who did not know him. My mother was quite the opposite; she even busied herself with local affairs. She had so much conversation with everyone that her whole body seemed to be a tongue. Battle was often joined with everybody by her. She passed her time drunk with wine in the company of dissolute men. Prostitute that she was, she mismanaged the household so that our plentiful possessions could not suffice for us (the management had been handed over to her by my father). She used her body in such a way that few of the villagers were able to escape her licentiousness. Illness never approached her body; she did not experience pain, even a passing one, but from birth to death she kept her body intact and in good health. Then it happened that my father died after wrestling with chronic illness. Immediately the rain began pouring down; thunder and lightening filled the air. The rain did not let up for three days and three nights, causing him to lie on the bed unburied, so the villagers shook their heads, wondering what evil had secretly befallen them all. "Is he such an enemy of God that even the earth will not receive him in burial?" Yet for fear that he would putrefy within and render the house inaccessible, even

though the weather was still intemperate and the rain pouring down, we gave him burial in whatever way we could. My mother, now finding herself more at liberty, yet more shamelessly plied the debauchery of her body; she practically transformed the house into a brothel. She lived in such debauchery and profligacy that she left little for me in her abundance. But no sooner had death come upon her (with fear, as it seemed to me) than she had such a funeral and pomp that you would think that even the air was joining in burying her. I was just passing out of childhood after her death and starting to be moved and titillated by physical desires such as usually occur. One evening I started to wonder what kind of life I would choose to live: would it be my father's, moderate, gentle, and well tempered? But then again I reckoned this: he achieved no good in life but departed this life having passed his whole time in sickness and affliction, and that not even the earth would receive him in burial. So if such a way of life was good in the sight of God, why was my father so tested, having chosen to live like that? Or would it be good to [live] like my mother? Should I devote my body to licentiousness, debauchery, and pleasure seeking? She abandoned none of her wicked doings and was drunk all her life long, yet she departed this life hale and hearty. So then,' she said, 'should I live like my mother? It is better to trust one's own eyes and not to go a step beyond what is plainly made known; and it seemed that she herself had established her worthless life for me. Night drew on and sleep immediately overtook me after these *logismoi*. There stood by me a person huge of body, fearful of countenance. Terrifying me by his appearance, he questioned me with an angry look and a harsh voice, "Tell me, you: What are the thoughts of your heart?" I was so terrified by his appearance and the look of him that I did not dare glance at him. Raising his voice, he again commanded me to confess my opinions; but I was so paralyzed by

fear that I forgot my *logismoi* and began saying I knew nothing. But even as I was denying it, that one caused me to remember everything that had been contemplated in my mind. Caught out and resorting to imploring, I begged to be worthy of forgiveness, and I explained the reason for this state of mind. He said, "Come now to see them both, your father and your mother, and choose for yourself which life you wish from now on." He took my hand and led me to a great plain with many gardens, all sorts of fruits, and diverse trees of a beauty that defied description. He led me in there; my father met me, embraced me, and kissed me, calling me his child, and I, clinging to him, begged to remain with him. But he said, "That is not possible at present; but if you want to follow in my footsteps, you will come here before long." As I went on begging to stay with him, he who brought me there drew me again by the hand, saying, "Come to see your own mother burning in the fire so that you may know to which way of life it is better to lean." He set me in a dark and gloomy house filled with roaring and disturbance and showed me a furnace ablaze with fire and boiling pitch with some persons of fearful aspect standing at the furnace. When I looked down, I saw my own mother submerged up to her neck in the furnace, chattering and clamping her teeth, being burned by the fire, and becoming the fodder of many worms. When she saw me, she called out with lamentation, calling me her child, "Ah me, my own deeds, child! Ah me, my doings! Everything to do with sobriety seemed nonsense to me. I did not believe there were punishments for *porneia* and adultery; I did not hold there was torture for drunkenness and debauchery. See what a great retribution and punishment I am receiving for a little pleasure; see what a severe sentence I receive for the smallest illicit delight; see how many are the wages I collect for despising God; all the immutable evils have caught up with me! Now is the time for helping, my child; recall now the

nourishment you received from me. Do you now return the benefit if you derived any good from me. Have mercy on me as I burn in the fire and am consumed by it; have mercy on me who am being examined by such tortures. Have pity on me, my child; give me your hand and lead me away from here." When I declined to do this on account of those standing by, again she called out with tears, "Help, my child; child, help me! Do not turn away from the lamentation of your own mother; remember the days of my labor pains, and turn not away from her who is being lost in the fire of Gehenna." Feeling some humane sentiment on account of her tears and the sound of her voice, I reached out my hand to draw her up, but the fire burned my hand, and I began to groan with weeping. They of the house arose, made fire, and asked the reason for my sighs. I explained to them what I had seen and that in fact I was resolved rather to follow the life of my father in the future, convinced by the unspeakable, tender, loving kindness of God what punishments lie ahead for those who want to live badly.' Such were the things that blessed virgin announced from the vision: that great is the reward of the good, while the punishments for evil deeds and a disorderly life are enormous. So, by this counsel, let us improve ourselves in order to be found [among the] blessed."

N 715 46. The same elder also told this about a certain bishop so that, drawing confidence especially from it, we might become responsible for our own salvation: "It was reported by some people to our local bishop (as he was the one who saw this and told us) that among the laity there were two certain pious ladies of the upper class who were not living decent lives. Somewhat troubled by the tale tellers and suspecting this of others too, he went to entreat God, asking to learn the exact [truth] from him, and in this he succeeded. After that divine and fearful liturgy and offering, through the faces he

beheld the souls of those approaching to partake of the holy mysteries as to what kind of sins each one was subject; and he saw the faces of the sinners as soot. Some of them had faces that looked burned and fiery with bloodshot eyes. [He saw] others of them with not only shining faces but also white clothing. When the Body of the Lord was distributed to some and they partook, it was engulfing them in flames and burning them up, while for the others it became like a light and, entering through the mouth, lit up their whole body. Among those who experienced these things there were some who had embraced the monastic life and some who were married.

"Then," he said, "he hastened to communicate the women himself so he might know what kind of women they were in their souls, and the same thing happened for them too: he saw some black in the face and bloodshot and fiery, [others] white. Among [the women] there came those two women whom they had accused before the bishop and on whose account the bishop had especially gone [to offer] such a prayer. As they approached the holy mysteries of Christ, he saw them possessed of a shining, respectable face and clad in white raiment. Then, when they had received the mysteries of Christ, it happened that they were illuminated as though with a light. For his part, again he had recourse to his customary intercession with God, wishing to learn the manner of the revelations vouchsafed to him.

"An angel of the Lord presented himself and told him to ask about each matter. The bishop immediately inquired about the two women, whether the former accusation against them was true or false, but the angel declared that everything said about them was true. So the bishop said to the angel, 'How, then, in receiving the mysteries of Christ, were they shining in the face, having white clothing, and shedding no small light?' Said the angel, 'It is because they had come to a realization of the deeds committed by them and had desisted from

them with tears, sighs, and almsgiving to the poor. By confession they have attained the divine reconciliation, having firmly declared never again to fall into the same evil [ways] if they could obtain pardon for their former sins. And through this they have attained the divine reconciliation and have been set free from the accusations. They are living the rest [of their lives] soberly, righteously, and devoutly.'

"The bishop professed himself amazed, not so much at the transformation of the women (for that happened to many of them) as at the generosity of God, since he not only refrained from subjecting them to punishment but also deemed them worthy of such grace. 'You have good reason to wonder at this, for you are a man,' said the angel to the bishop, 'but our master and your God, being good by nature and the lover of mankind, not only does not send to punishment those who desist from their own sins and fall down before him in confession, but terminates [his] anger and deems them worthy of honour. For God so loves the world as to give his only-begotten Son for them [see John 3:16]. He, then, who chose to die for those who were his enemies, will he not even more so release from punishment those who become his friends (undergoing a change of heart concerning the deeds they have done before) and grant them the enjoyment of the good things prepared for them by him? So be well aware of this: nothing of human transgressions overcomes the love of God for mankind, if only a person by repentance abandons the evils he formerly committed. Because God is the lover of mankind, he understands the feebleness of your race, the strength of the passions, the power and malignity of the devil. He forgives men falling into sin like sons or patiently awaits their self-correction, their change of heart, their supplication of his goodness. Since he is compassionate with the feeble, he immediately sets aside the punishments and grants them the good things prepared for the righteous.'

"Then the bishop said to the angel, 'Now tell me about the difference in the faces, I beg you, to what kinds of transgressions each of them is subject so that, learning about these, I might be released from all ignorance.' The angel of the Lord said to him, 'Those with bright and shining faces are living in sobriety, purity, and righteousness; they are modest, compassionate, and merciful. Those who have black faces are the workers of *porneia* and licentiousness together with other [kinds of] profligacy and wantonness. Those who appear bloodshot and fiery are living in knavery and wrongdoing; they are abusers and blasphemers, treacherous and murderous.' And again the angel said to him, 'So now help them, if you desire their salvation, for this,' he said, 'is why you attained your own prayers, so that learning by seeing the sins of those under instruction, you may, by counsels and exhortations, make them better through turning to Jesus Christ our Lord, who died and rose from the dead for them. Inasmuch as you have strength, zeal, and love from your Lord-and-master Christ, take every care of them to turn them away from their own transgressions toward God, persuading them of what kind of transgressions they are subject to; and let them not despair of their own salvation. For from this there is salvation of the soul for those repenting and turning toward God, and there is a great reward for you who have imitated your own Lord-and-master, who, for the salvation of men, did not abandon the heavens but made a sojourn on earth.'"

47. There was once a person who repented and lived in *hesychia*. He promptly wounded his foot, falling on a stone. He lost a great deal of blood and became very weak, to the point of surrendering his soul. The demons came wanting to take his soul, but the angels said to them, "Look at the stone and see his blood he shed for the Lord," and while the angels were saying this, his soul was set free. N 88

N 761B; Anastasius the Sinaite 52

48. They used to say of a brother that one Sunday when it was time for worship, he got up as usual to go to church, but the devil mocked him, saying, "Where are you going that you might partake of bread and wine? You should not let yourself be made a fool when they tell you it is the Body and Blood of Christ." The brother was convinced in his mind and did not go to church as he usually did. Now the brothers were waiting for that brother because that is the custom in the desert: they do not hold the service until everybody has arrived. After they had waited a long time and he still had not come, they got up and went for him, saying, "Maybe he is ill, or perhaps he has died."

Coming to the brother's cell, they asked him, "Why did you not come to church, brother?" but he was ashamed to tell them why. Realizing that this was the evil work of the devil, the brothers prostrated themselves before him, asking him to reveal the devil's machination to them. Then he declared before them, "Forgive me, brothers. I got up as usual to come to church, and then my thoughts said to me, 'It is not body and blood you are going to receive but only bread and wine.' So if you want me to come with you, then heal my *logismos* concerning this statement." "Get up and come with us," they said, "and we will ask God to show you the divine power descending." He got up and went to church with them.

When the praying started, they made intercession with God on the brother's behalf, that the power of the mysteries be revealed to him. Then, placing the brother in the midst of the church, they began the celebration of the service. He did not cease to have his face bathed in tears until the *synaxis* came to an end. When it was over, they called upon the brother, asking him in these words, "Tell us if God revealed anything to you so that we too can benefit." He began telling them, weeping as he did so, "During the singing of the appointed psalms, when the teaching of the apostles was being read, and while the book of the Gospels was set forth, I saw the roof opened

and heaven appearing. Each word of the holy Gospel became as a flame reaching up to heaven. When the benediction of the Gospel had been pronounced, the clergy processed out of the sacristy carrying the Communion of the holy mysteries. Then I saw the heavens opened again and fire descending. After the fire [there came] a host of angels and, above them, two other virtuous persons of a beauty beyond words, shining like lightening, and there was a small child between the two persons. The angels stood around the holy table, while the two persons were above it with the child between them. When it came time for the benediction of the holy prayers and the clergy drew near to break the bread that was offered, I saw how the two persons above the table held the hands and feet of the child who was between them and, grasping a sword, slaughtered it, emptying its blood into the cup that was set on the table. Then they cut up its body and placed the pieces of it on the bread, which then became flesh. I recalled the words of the apostle, 'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us' [1 Cor 5:7]. When the brothers drew near to partake of the holy offering, flesh was given to them; but when they called out, saying, 'Amen,' it became bread in their hands. When I came to communicate, flesh was given to me, and I was unable to partake of it. Then I heard a voice saying in my ear, 'Why are you not partaking, man? Is this not what you were looking for?' and I said, 'Have pity on me, Lord. I cannot consume flesh.' Again [the voice] spoke to me, 'If a man were able to consume flesh, it would have been found [to be] flesh, just as you also found it. But nobody can eat flesh; that is why the Lord prescribed bread for the offering. Just as in the beginning Adam became flesh at the hands of God and God breathed into him the breath[7] of life, then flesh separated from [spirit] and became earth while the spirit lived on, so Christ gives his own flesh with the

[7] Or spirit.

Holy Spirit, the flesh disappearing into heaven while the Spirit stays in your heart. If you have believed, partake of that which is in your heart,' and I said, 'Lord, I believe.' When I said that, the flesh that I was holding in my hand became bread. Giving thanks to God, I partook of the holy sacrament. As the service continued and the clergy came together, I saw the child again between the two persons, and the clergy were gathering up the [remains of] the holy gifts. Again I saw the roof opened and the divine power rising up to heaven."

The brothers were moved to great sorrow for sin on hearing this; they returned, glorifying and praising God, each one to his own cell.

49. One of the fathers related, "There was a priest of our region who had endured many years of ascetic discipline and who used to perform his meditation with copious reading of the Sacred Scriptures. This is what he told me: I had a maiden sister, young in years but of a mature disposition, who passed all the years of her youth in fasting and self-discipline. She was sitting beside me one day when she suddenly rolled over on her back and lay there like a corpse, her hands outstretched. She made no sound and was hardly breathing. The following day, however, at that very moment she woke as though from a deep sleep, trembling and terrified. When I asked her whatever might have befallen her, she asked me to let her remain silent for a while, until the fear in her soul died down, allowing her to give an easy and straightforward report of what had been revealed to her. For, she said, what she had seen, both the good things and the bad ones, were beyond the scope of seeing and hearing. She continued to be in deep sorrow for very many days. Without receiving a word from anybody or saying anything herself to anyone else, she would frequently mention certain persons by name, with tears and groans, declaring them wretched.

I made an effort to learn what she had seen and, eventually, acceding to my request, she reluctantly began this account: "At the moment when I was sitting with you, two white-haired men of magnificent appearance, dressed in white, took me by the hand and ordered me to follow them. Then one of them who held a rod in his hand stretched it out toward heaven and, opening it up, caused us all to be inside it. They took me and brought me to a place where many angels were standing around a curtained arcade beyond description. Entering [that arcade], I beheld a throne raised up on high and many [angels] there too, standing around it, who exceeded those outside in both stature and beauty. There sat upon the throne one whose brightness outshone all the others'; they all fell down and worshiped him, and those who were holding me ordered me to worship him too. After I had worshiped him I heard him commanding, 'Take her and show her everything so that she may inform those who are still in life.' Taking me by the hand, they executed his command.

"Going through a certain place, I saw buildings of indescribable size and beauty, constructed in various forms, all of them glistening with gold and precious stones; there were thousands of hangings worked with colored and golden thread. A great company of men and women was living there, resplendent with glory and honor. As they showed me each company of them, [my guides] said, 'Some are bishops who ruled the people in righteousness and holiness; others are clergy and laymen, some of whom distinguished themselves in their order; others [are those] who lived decently and righteously.' And, brother, I saw the priest of this village and also some laymen whom you and I know have departed this life; I saw many virgins and widows, several people of my acquaintance, [and some] who lived decently in marriage. There were also some I did not recognize, concerning whom in particular those leading me would

tell me about, group by group. 'These are from various towns and villages. Of the women, some resided in religious houses, and some lived alone. Some passed the greater part of their lives in widowhood, living out the greater part of their time ground down in affliction and wretchedness. Among them are some others who previously sinned against their virginity or widowhood but who were restored again to their former status by repentance and many tears.'

"Leading me again by the hand, they now took me into some places that were gloomy in appearance and terrifying to look at, filled with all kinds of lamentation and groaning." When she was about to begin this part of her story, the amount of her tears got so great that they drenched all her clothing, and as she related what was shown to her, her voice broke, her tongue involuntarily cleaving to her teeth, which prevented her from speaking for a considerable time. Nevertheless, she forced herself to speak as follows: "I now saw some places that were so objectionable and horrid that they were insufferable to both eye and ear. Those who were with me said that these places were prepared for the chastisement of the godless, the iniquitous, and also those in the world who bore the name of Christian but who were in the grip of many evils. From there," she said, "a fiery furnace, a fearful thing, could be seen.

"On seeing this, I tremulously asked them, 'For which of the wretches is that prepared?' They said, 'For those in the ranks of the clergy who abuse the church of God in greed and injustice, who impenitently lead shameful lives,' and they mentioned certain distinguished people by name, some of whom, and those resident in this city, I would hear were liable [for punishment], and some belonging to the church near where I live. When, speaking with clenched teeth, I tremulously asked them whether similar evils were prepared for those in the clergy and virginity who were doing

evil deeds, the angel answered and said, 'O virgin, there will be enough evils left for their disobedience to God and their injustice toward their neighbors. Those who are brought here shall be deservedly abandoned here. And God will not overlook those who suffered there because of them, nor will he leave unpunished those who displeased him; the almighty God will hand out good or bad things to them all.'

"Taking me from there, they stood me in a place where the likeness of a river of fire was flowing, flooding the area that was suffused with profound darkness, filled with groaning and confusion, with horrendous gnashing of teeth and lamentation. The whole place was replete with fearful dread. And there I saw, brother, in addition to others, a considerable number of virgins of various ranks and some widows. [My angel] declared that these women had never attained any degree of righteousness worthy of their way of life, and when I asked [the angel] what they had done, he said, 'They went around from place to place, house to house, bringing the lives of others into disrepute, giving themselves to drunkenness and the delights of the flesh while paying no regard to psalm singing, prayer, and fasting—the very things they had engaged themselves with promises to God to perform. [Instead], they destroyed and prostituted themselves by their lifestyle; many of them procured abortions, hoping to conceal the fact from public knowledge.' I also saw being punished there those who had not ruled their religious houses [*askētēria*] with wisdom and justice, women who were responsible for the corruption and ruin of some [sisters]. I saw others too, male and female, being punished for a variety of iniquities. No less frightened (seeing their loud groaning and lamentation) than they themselves were, I begged to learn where these [women] and most of those who were there had come from. The angels replied, 'They are all from different places, but they have this in common:

that they fell into sin. They now have this in common too: that every one of them is suffering punishment.'

"Looking carefully," she continued, "I noticed two virgins lodged in that fiery punishment who were particularly dear to me, the ones whom you, brother, because of your affection for me, often admonished with much advice and encouragements. When I saw them groaning aloud, I called each of them by name. When they saw me, their faces increased the shame they were feeling on account of their punishment, and they hung their heads. With tears in my eyes, I asked them what their secret practices, concealed from most [of us], might have been, what evil practices they had fallen into, participating in the evils of that place. 'Since the punishments themselves allege and proclaim our misdeeds,' they cried, 'why do you have to ask us about them? Why should we hide ourselves any longer? We lost our virginity and fell prey to *porneia*. In the eyes of men we practiced self-control and fasting, but we did the opposite in secret, seeking only the esteem of men and not taking into account what was threatened here, and now look: everything there is transformed into evil here. We are being justly punished for our deviation there; our love of esteem there has now become our shame here. We are receiving a fitting punishment for all of our misdeeds at the one time, and we are not fit to receive an ounce of help from any of our friends and acquaintances there. But if you have any influence, now you ought to come to our aid and intercede with them to deliver us from the horrors to which we are prey by sharing the agonies in which we are placed and which we are suffering during a time of pain. The kindnesses of friends are now of greatest value to those who are in trouble and adversity. Remember our friendship in former times; show now your tenderness and love for us by asking those who are punishing us for a little mercy toward us.'

"For my part, brother, I answered them like this: 'And what became of my brother's many counsels and exhortations to you? Where are the many words of encouragement [he gave you]? Where [is] his great concern for you? Where [are] his continual prayers on your behalf? Did they not suffice to ensure that you not end up here? Now it is possible that all counsel, caring, and praying for a person is pointless and in vain unless that person renders himself or herself compliant with them.'

"They were ashamed and kept quiet at first," she said, "but then they spoke: 'We do not need accusations and recriminations but comfort and help; we need mercy, sympathy, and compassion. If you are able, let yourself be moved to pity and help us.' 'If I could be any help to you or do you any good, I would be willing to do it,' I said. They said I was to intercede with those charged with their punishment, asking that, if it were possible, they would free them from their chastisement altogether, and, if not, that at least some respite be given them and a time of rest. Even this would be no small consolation for them in such a bad situation.

"I fell down," she said, "grasping the feet [of the angels] and begged them with tears and lamentation, saying, 'You must remember their Lord-and-master, who is the lover of men and good, and relieve them of the rest of that punishment,' but they dismissed me empty-handed, saying with a fearful look that there was no time now for their repentance and confession. 'Because they wasted away the time allowed to them by God for [repentance and confession] on *porneia*, murders, luxuries, and all kinds of irregular behavior, they cannot attain the things you are asking for them here. Since they used to consider good things to be fairy tales, how can they now ask to participate in them? It is only right that having sown such deeds there, they should reap the fruit of them here. They should have demonstrated an amendment there where they fell prey

to sin as a result of their own foolishness, and then they would not have experienced the evils here. It is not right that they should gain here those good things that they scorned there, but they should experience punishment until the end for those things they despised. Nor is it just that they should be considered worthy of a rest on account of their evil [actions] up until death. If they gave their bodies no respite from evil doing, how can they justly be granted respite here? Go your way, virgin. Report to those there the good and the bad things here, unless you too seem to them to be talking more nonsense than them all.'

"Seeing that I had achieved nothing, groaning and gnashing their teeth, the two virgins said, 'Sister, since we can obtain no credit here for what was done for us in the past (having turned a deaf ear and heeded no one who, in the world, counseled and enjoined us to live a life befitting virginity), your intervention here appears to be similarly ineffectual, returning like for like. But since you are abandoning us altogether and returning to those there, we beg you to give a full report to our colleague there, for, like us, she is making a game of virginity, putting on a show of fasting and self-control to deceive men, laughing at what goes on here, judging what is said about it to be mere fables, as we once did. [We beg you] to persuade her that it is all true. Go and make sure that she does not continue to live as we did right to the end and then experience the evils we endure here. Exhort her to repent in the future in the place appointed for penitence and to make reparation for the bad things she did with us, in order that there might be salvation for her soul.'"

N 371 50. They used to say of a great elder that he lived at Porphyrites and that if he lifted his eyes up to heaven, he could see everything that was in it, and if he looked at the earth, he would see the chasms and everything in them.

51. An elder said of one who had the second sight that he went into a city to sell his wares and was fortunate enough to install himself at the gate of a rich man who was at the point of death. As he sat there, watching closely, he saw some black horses and their fearsome black riders who were holding fiery staves. When they arrived at the gate, in they went, each one of them. When the sick man saw them, he cried out with a loud voice, "Help me, Lord!" But those who were sent said to him, "Are you only beginning to think of God now that the sun has set? Why did you not seek him out in the full light of day? There is not a scrap of hope or comfort for you now," and so saying, they seized him and made off. N 492

52. An elder used to say, "It is good to confess one's *logismoi* to the fathers. Here, there were two brothers coming to an elder, one old, one young. The older one complained bitterly about the younger in the presence of the elder, but turning his attention toward the younger one, the holy one began saying to him, 'Is he speaking the truth about you?' and the other agreed, saying, 'Yes, [it is] the truth, for I cause him great distress.' Then the other redoubled his accusations. Muttering to himself, the younger one said in a whisper, 'Be quiet, or the holy one will think it is true what you are saying.' But [the elder] heard and uttered a cry. When the brothers asked him why he did that, the elder answered, 'When these two brothers came in and approached me, a shady one carrying a bow stood by, and at each accusation by the older one, he let fly an arrow at the younger, but the arrow did not even reach his clothes. Finally, when the younger one muttered to himself, the shady one let fly an arrow at him that was going to hit him; it was to prevent him being hit that I cried out.' When the two brothers begged to receive treatment for their passion, the elder said, 'When you fall to quarrelling, remember the shady character—and stop.' They did so and were healed." N 638

53. A brother going to Scete arrived at the Nile worn out by the journey. At the heat of the day, he took his clothes off and went down to bathe. Then an animal called a crocodile rushed in and seized him. Now an elder who had the second sight passed by and saw that the brother had been seized. He shouted at the animal, saying, "Why did you eat the *abba*?" In a human voice the beast said to him, "I did not eat an *abba*. I found a worldling and ate him; the monk is there," and it nodded toward the habit. The elder went his way grieving over what had taken place.

19

Wonder-Working Elders

1. Abba Doulas the disciple of Abba Bessarion used to say, "Once, while we were travelling along the seashore, I was thirsty and said to Abba Bessarion, 'Abba, I am very thirsty.' The elder offered a prayer and said to me, 'Drink from the sea.' The water was made sweet, and I began drinking. But I poured some into the vessel in case I got thirsty farther on. When he saw, the elder said to me, 'God is here and God is everywhere.'" Bessarion 1

2. Another time he was in need again; he offered a prayer, crossed [the river] Chrysoroas on foot, and came to the other bank. Astonished, I fell at his feet, saying, "How did your feet feel when you were walking on the water?" The elder said, "It felt like water up to the ankles; for the rest, it was dry land." Bessarion 2

3. Another time we were going to another elder again when the sun was about to set. The elder prayed, saying, "I beg you, Lord, let the sun stay still until I arrive at your servant's," and so it happened. Bessarion 3

4. A person possessed of a demon once came to Scete, and prayer was offered on his behalf in the church. The demon did not come out, for it was a difficult one. The clergy said, "What can we do about this demon? Nobody is able to cast this one out other than Abba Bessarion; and if we appeal to him on this fellow's behalf, he will not even come into the church. Let us act like this: see, he comes to the church before everybody at dawn. We will make the afflicted fellow sit in his place, and when he comes into church, let us stand in prayer and Bessarion 5

say to him, 'Wake the brother up too, Abba.'" So that is how they acted; when the elder came at dawn, they stood in prayer and said to him, "Wake the brother up too, Abba." He said to him, "Get up and get out," and right away the demon went out of him, and the fellow was cured from that hour.

Elijah 2

5. The elders were telling Abba Elijah in Egypt about Abba Agathon that he was a good brother. The elder said to them, "He is good in his generation." They said to him, "What about the [generation of] the older ones?" and in reply he said to them, "He is good in his generation; in the generation of the older ones I saw a person at Scete who could stop the sun in the sky, like Joshua the son of Nun" [see Josh 10:12-23]. They were astounded when they heard this, and they glorified God.

Longinus 3

6. There was a woman who had the condition known as cancer in her breast who sought to meet with Abba Longinus when she heard of him. He was staying at the ninth milepost to the west of Alexandria. When the woman came looking for him, that blessed one happened to be gathering wood by the sea. When she found him, the woman (unaware that it was he) said to him, "Abba, where about here is the servant of God Longinus living?" "What do you want with that imposter," he said. "Do not go to him, for he is an imposter. What is the matter with you?" The woman showed him her condition; the elder made the sign [of the cross] over the place and dismissed her, saying, "Off you go. The Lord is healing you; Longinus cannot do you any good." The woman went her way believing what was said—and was immediately healed. After she had told the matter to some people and said what the characteristics of the elder were, she realized that it was Abba Longinus.

7. Another time a woman who had something seriously wrong with her hand came with another woman outside the window on the north side of [Longinus's] cell,

looked in on him, and took note of him sitting there. He reproved her saying, "Go away, woman," but she remained [there] watching him but saying nothing, for she was afraid. He realized and became convinced what was wrong with her. He got up and shut the window in her face, saying, "Go away, woman; there is nothing wrong with you," and she was healed from that hour.

Longinus 4

8. Another time they brought somebody possessed of a demon to him, but he said to them, "I can do nothing for you; go to Abba Zēnō instead." Then, when Abba Zēnō prayed, he began to put pressure on the demon, chasing it out. The demon began shouting out, "Do you think I am coming out because of you? Look, Abba Longinus is in prayer over there, pleading against me; it is in fear of *his* prayers that I am coming out, since I gave you no reaction."

9. On another occasion somebody came to visit him. He took his hood and came to the patient. As he approached the door to come in, the patient cried out, "Why did you bring Longinus here to persecute me?" and that very hour the demon went out of him.

Macarius of Egypt 14

10. They used to say of Abba Macarius the Great that when he was coming back up from Scete carrying [a load of] baskets, he was exhausted. He sat down and prayed, saying, "O God, you know that I have no more strength," and he immediately found himself at the river.

Macarius of Egypt 14

11. There was a person in Egypt who had a paralyzed son. He brought him to Abba Macarius' cell, left him at the door in tears, and went off far away. The elder peeped out and saw the child weeping. "Who brought you here?" he said to the child. The child said, "My father threw me down here and went away." "Get up and catch up to him," the elder said to him. He was instantly made whole; getting up, he caught up with his father, and off they went to their house.

Macarius of Egypt 7

12. Abba Sisoēs used to say, "When I was at Scete with Abba Macarius, we went harvesting with him, seven persons in all, and here there was a widow gleaning behind us, and she never stopped crying. The elder called the landowner over and said to him, 'What is matter with that old woman who is crying all the time?' He said to him, 'Her husband had a loan from somebody and died suddenly without telling where he had put it. The lender wants to take her and her children for slaves.' The elder said to him, 'Tell her to come to us when we take a break for the heat.'

"When she came, the elder said to her, 'Why are you crying all the time?' The woman said, 'My husband died having taken a loan from somebody, and when he lay dying, he did not say where he had put it.' 'Come and show me where you buried him,' the elder said to her, and taking the brothers too, he went out with her. When they came to the place, the elder said to her, 'Go away to your house,' and when we had prayed at the place, the elder called upon the dead man, saying, 'Ah, so-and-so, where did you put the loan you had from somebody else?' and he replied, saying, 'It is hidden in my house at the foot of the bed.' The elder said to him, 'Go back to sleep again until the day of resurrection.'

"The brothers fell at his feet when they saw this, and the elder said to them, 'This did not happen on my account, for I am nothing. God achieved this thing on account of the widow and the orphans. The great thing is that God looks for the soul without sin, and [that soul] receives whatever it asks.' He came and told the widow where the loan was lying; she took it, gave it to her master, and set her children free. Those who had heard glorified God."

Milēs 1

13. Once when Abba Milēs was passing through a place, he saw a monk being held by some persons as one who had committed murder. The elder approached and, having questioned the brother, learned that he was being

falsely accused. He said to those who were detaining him, "Where is the murder victim?" They showed him the dead man; he approached the murdered man and told everybody to pray, then he stretched out his hands to God, and the dead man arose. [The elder] said to him in the presence of all, "Tell us who it was that murdered you." "I went into the church and gave money to the priest," he said, "but he rose up and slew me; then he took me and threw me down at the *abba*'s monastery. I beg you to take the money from him and to give it my children." Then the elder said to him, "Go to sleep now until the Lord comes to raise you," and he immediately fell asleep.

Poemen 7; see *HL* 43:3-4

14. Many elders once visited Abba Poemen, and here there was some worldling, a relative of Abba Poemen, with a child whose face was turned backward by [devilish] machination. Seeing the number of elders, the father took the child and sat outside the monastery weeping. One elder had the good fortune to go out and, when he saw him, said to him, "Why are you weeping, fellow?" "I am a relative of Abba Poemen," he said, "and look, an affliction like that has befallen this child. We wanted to bring him to the elder, but we were afraid. He does not want to see us; and if he learns that I am here, he will send and chase me away. But seeing that you were here, I presumed to come. As you will, Abba, have mercy on me; take the child inside and intercede for him." The elder took the child and went in, but he acted shrewdly. He said nothing at first to Abba Poemen when he brought the child, but beginning with the least of the brothers, he said, "Make the sign [of the cross] over the child." When he had made them all sign it in order, later on he brought it to Abba Poemen. He was unwilling to sign it, but they begged him, saying, "Do like the rest of us, Father." He heaved a sigh, stood up, and prayed, saying, "O God, heal your creature so that it be not dominated by the enemy." He signed, healed [the child], and gave it back sane and sound to the father.

Paul 1

15. One of the fathers told about an Abba Paul that he was in the lower parts of Egypt living in the Thebaid and that he would hold asps, snakes, and scorpions in his hands [see Luke 10:19] and cut them in two. The brothers prostrated themselves before him, saying, "Tell us what kind of activity you undertook so that you acquired that grace." "Forgive me, fathers," he said. "If one acquires purity, everything is subject to him, as it was to Adam when he was in Paradise before he contravened the commandment" [see Gen 1:28].

N 409

16. = 12.12

Sisoēs 18

17. A worldling, together with his son, once visited Abba Sisoēs at the mountain of Abba Antony, and the child died on the way. He was not disturbed; he took [the son] to the elder in faith and fell down with his son as though prostrating themselves in order to be blessed by the elder. Then the father got up, leaving the son at the elder's feet, and went out of the cell. Thinking that the child was prostrating itself to him, the elder said, "Get up and go out," for he did not realize that he was dead. [The child] immediately got up and went out. His father was astounded when he saw him; in he went and did homage to the elder, telling him what had happened. But the elder was saddened on hearing it, for he did not want that to happen. His disciple ordered [the father] not to report it to anybody until the elder's death.

Sisoēs 21

18. Abraham the disciple of Abba Sisoēs was once tempted by a demon, and the elder perceived that he had fallen. He got up, stretched his hands to heaven, and said, "O God, whether you want to or not, I am not letting you go until you heal him," and he was immediately healed.

N 333

19. There was an elder living in retreat at the Jordan who entered a cave in the heat of the day. Inside there was a lion; it began grinding its teeth and roaring. The

elder said to it, "Why are you getting upset? There is enough room here for both you and me. If that is not to your liking, then get up and leave." The lion could not bear it; out it went.

20. One of the elders once went up from Scete to Terenouthis, and there where he broke [his journey] they brought a little wine to him, as he was exhausted from his ascetic lifestyle. When others heard of him, they brought a person possessed of a demon to him. The demon began abusing the elder and, saying, "You have brought me to this wine bibber?" The elder, being humble minded, did not want to expel [the demon], but because of his insult, he said, "I have confidence in Christ that I will not finish drinking this cup until you come out." When the elder began drinking, the demon cried out saying, "You are burning me," and before he had finished the cup, the demon came out by the grace of Christ.

see Xanthias 2

21. One of the fathers sent his disciple to draw water, but the well was a long way from their cell, and he also forgot to take the rope. He realized that he had not brought the rope when he came to the well. He offered a prayer, crying out and saying: "Cistern, cistern, my *abba* said to fill the pot with water," and the water promptly rose up to the top. The brother filled [his vessel], and the water went back down.

N 27

20

Virtuous Living

Bessarion 4b

1. Abba Doulas recounted, "Once when Abba Bessarion and I were walking in the desert, we came across some cave and found a brother living there making rope. He neither looked up nor greeted us, nor did he have the least desire to engage us in conversation. The elder said to me, 'Let us be on our way; perhaps the brother does not have the confidence to speak to us.' So we came out of there and journeyed on to Lyco to visit Abba John. On our way back we came across the cave again where we had seen the brother. The elder said to me, 'Let us go in to him; perhaps God will give him confidence to speak with us,' and when we came in, we found him dead. The elder said to me, 'Come on, brother, let us wrap up his body; God sent us here to do this.' As we were wrapping him up for burial, we discovered that he was a woman. The elder was amazed and said, 'This is how women too wrestle with Satan, and we lead shameful lives in the cities.' We glorified God who safeguards those who love him, then we departed from that place."

Eucharistos 1

2. Two of the fathers besought God to assure them as to what stature they had attained. A voice came to them, saying, "In such and such a village of Egypt there is a worldling, Eucharistos by name, and his wife is called Maria; you have not attained their stature." The two elders got up and went to the village. On inquiring, they found his cell and the wife. They said to her, "Where is your husband?" "He is a shepherd," she said, "and he is pasturing [the] sheep," and she brought them into her house. When evening fell, there came Eucharistos with

the sheep. When he saw the elders, he prepared a table for them and brought water to wash their feet. The elders said to him, "We will not eat anything unless you tell us what you do," but Eucharistos, being humble minded, said, "I am a shepherd and she is my wife." The elders persisted, begging him to speak, but he was unwilling. Then they said to him, "God has sent us to you." He was afraid when he heard this being said, and he said to them, "Here we have these sheep from our parents. Whatever by the grace of God we gain from them we divide into three parts: one part for the poor, one for hospitality, the third part for our own need. From when I took my wife I have not been defiled, neither I nor she (she is a virgin), each of us sleeping alone. We wear sackcloth by night, our clothes by day. Nobody knew this until now." The elders were amazed when they heard this, and they went their way glorifying God.

Macarius the Egyptian 33

3. Abba Bētimos used to say that Abba Macarius recounted [this]: "Once when I was living at Scete," he said, "two young strangers came down [that way]. One of them had a beard and the other was growing the beginning of one. They came to me saying 'Where is Abba Macarius' cell?' and I said to them, 'Why do you want him?' 'We heard about him and about Scete,' they said, 'and we have come to see him.' 'I am he,' I said to them, and they prostrated themselves, saying, 'We want to stay here.' But seeing they were delicate and from affluent [homes], I told them, 'You cannot live here.' The older one said, 'If we cannot live here, we will go somewhere else.' I said to myself, 'Why am I sending them away and giving offense? The toil will make them run away of their own accord.' I said to them, 'Come, make yourselves a cell if you can.' 'Show us a place and we will make it,' they said. Giving them an axe and a basket full of bread and salt, I showed them rock as hard as iron, saying, 'Quarry here, and bring yourselves

wood from the marsh; set up a roof and live here,' for I thought they were going to run away because of the toil. But they asked me, 'What work do they do here?' 'Rope making,' I told them. Taking some palm fronds from the marsh, I showed them the elements of rope making and how you have to sew. 'Make some baskets, deliver them to the guardians, and they will bring you loaves,' I told them; then I went away.

"But for their part, they patiently performed everything I had said, and they did not visit me for three years. I went on doing battle with my *logismoi*, saying, 'What on earth is their activity that they have not come to inquire of me about a *logismos*? There are those from far away who come to me, but these who are near did not come, nor did they go anywhere else—other than to church in silence to receive the sacrament.' For a week I fasted and prayed to God to show me their activity. After a week I got up and went to see how they were living. When I knocked, they opened [the gate] and embraced me—in silence. I offered a prayer and sat down. The older gave a sign to the younger one to go out; then he sat there in silence, braiding rope. At the ninth hour he knocked; the younger one came and prepared a little food, setting a table at the older one's prompting. He placed three dried loaves on it, then stood in silence. 'Get up, let us eat,' I said; we got up and ate. He brought the bottle and we drank. When evening fell, they said to me, 'Are you going?' 'No,' I said. 'I am sleeping here.' They put out a mat for me in one place and [one for] themselves in the other corner. Removing their girdles and their scapulars, they lay down together on the mat opposite me.

"When they had lain down, I prayed to God to reveal their activity to me, and here the roof was opened and it was light as in the day, but they were not seeing the light. When they thought I was sleeping, the older one nudged the younger in the ribs; they got up, put their

girdles on, and stretched out their hands to heaven. I was observing them, but they were not looking at me. I saw the demons coming at the younger one like flies; some came at his mouth, some at his eyes. I also saw an angel of the Lord who had a fiery sword; he was defending him and chasing the demons away from him, but they were unable to approach the older one. Toward dawn they lay down; I made as though I had just woken up, and they did likewise. The older one merely said this to me: 'Do you want us to offer the twelve psalms?' 'Yes,' I said, and the younger one sang five psalms, six verses at a time with an *allelujah*. With each verse a lamp of fire came out of his mouth and went up into the heavens. Likewise, when the older one opened his mouth to sing, something like a rope of fire came out, stretching up to heaven; I added a little too. As I was leaving, I said, 'Pray for me,' but they prostrated themselves [to me] in silence; I discovered that the older one was perfect, while the enemy was still in combat with the younger one. A few days later the older brother died; the younger one [died] the third day after."

When some of the fathers visited Abba Macarius, he would bring them to their cell, saying, "Come and see the *martyrion* of the young strangers."

Macarius the Egyptian 2

4. Abba Macarius the Egyptian once came from Scete to the Mount of Nitria for the Eucharist of Abba Pambo, and the fathers said to him, "Utter a saying for the brothers," but he said, "I have not yet become a monk; I have, however, seen monks. Once when I was staying in a cell at Scete, my *logismoi* disturbed me, saying, 'Go farther into the desert and see what you will behold there.' I went on combating that *logismos* for five years, saying, 'Maybe it is from demons?' but, as my *logismos* persisted, I went off into the desert. I found a lake of water there with an island in the middle of it; the creatures of the desert came to drink from it. And in the midst of it I saw two naked men; my body trembled with fear,

for I thought they were spirits, but when they saw me trembling, they spoke to me, 'Do not be afraid; we are humans too.' I said to them, 'Where are you from, and how did you come into this desert?' 'We are from a *coenobion*,' they said, 'and having made an agreement, we came out here; forty years we have [been here].' One of them was Egyptian, the other Libyan.

"They questioned me, saying, 'How is it with the world? Does the water [of the Nile] rise at its appointed time? Is the world enjoying prosperity?' 'Yes,' I told them; then I too asked them, 'How can I become a monk?' They told me, 'A person cannot become a monk unless he renounces all that has to do with the world.' 'I am a weakling and do not have the power that you have,' I told them; and they said to me, 'If you do not have the power that we have, remain in your cell and weep for your sins.' I asked them, 'Are you not cold when it is winter, and will your bodies not burn when [searing] heat comes?' but they said, 'God has so arranged things for us that neither do we feel cold in winter nor does the heat burn us up.' "That is why I told you that I have not yet become a monk; forgive me, brothers."

Sisoēs 7

5. Abba Sisoēs was once staying alone at the mountain of Abba Antony; as his attendant was delayed in coming to him, he had not seen anybody for upward of ten months. As he was walking about on the mountain, he came across a Pharanite hunting wild beasts. He said to him, "Where do you come from, and how long have you been here?" "Of a truth, Abba, I have been on this mountain eleven months and have not seen anybody but you," he said. When the elder heard this, he went into his own cell and smote himself, saying, "Look, Sisoēs, you thought you had accomplished something, and in fact you have not yet accomplished what this worldling has done."

Sisoēs 24

6. The same Abba Sisoēs always used to close the door when staying in his cell.

7. They used to say of him that when he was at the point of death and the fathers were sitting with him, his face lit up like the sun, and he said to them, "Look, Abba Antony has come," and a little later he spoke to them again, "Look, the chorus of the prophets has come." Again his face shone excessively, and he said, "Look, the chorus of the apostles has come." Then his face was doubly lit up, and now he seemed to be talking with some people. The fathers besought him, saying, "With whom are you speaking, Father?" and he said, "Look, the angels have come here to take me, and I am begging them that I be allowed a little time to repent." The fathers said to him, "You do not need to repent, Father," but the elder said to them, "In fact I do not know that I have made a beginning," and they all realized that he was perfect. His face suddenly lit up like the sun again, and they were all afraid. He said to them, "Look, the Lord has come and is saying, 'Bring me the choice vessel [see Acts 9:15] of the desert,'" and forthwith he gave up the spirit. There was a lightning strike, and the whole place was filled with perfume. Sisōēs 14

8. They used to say of Abba Ōr that he neither lied nor swore nor cursed anybody and that he never spoke other than out of necessity. Ōr 2

9. The same [father] would say to his disciple, "Make sure you never bring an alien maxim into this cell." Ōr 3

10. They said of the Scetiotes that no conceit arose among them because they surpassed [everyone] in virtues. One ate every second day, one every fourth, and another once a week, while yet another ate no bread. In brief, the saints were adorned with every virtue. N 467

11. There was a great *abba*, and his disciple said of him that in all of twenty years he never slept lying down but that he slept sitting on the bench where he used to sit when working. He ate every second, fourth, or fifth day; N 146

he passed twenty years like that. [The disciple] said, "When I said, 'What is this? Why do you go on like this, Abba?' he answered me, 'Because the judgment of God comes before my eyes and I cannot bear [it].'

"One day it happened that while we were offering the *synaxis*, I was distracted and made a mistake in a phrase of the psalm. At the conclusion of the *synaxis*, the elder reproved me, saying, 'When I am offering the *synaxis*, I imagine that there is a fire burning beneath me and that I am on fire; thus my *logismos* cannot wander to the left or to the right. Where was your *logismos* when we performed the *synaxis*, that you mistook a phrase of the psalm? Do you not know that you stand in the presence of God and that you are speaking to God when you discharge the *synaxis*?' Another time the elder came out during the night and found me sleeping in the courtyard of the cell. He stood lamenting over me, saying, 'Now where can this brother's *logismos* be, sleeping like that without a care in the world?'"

N 132 C 12. Two great elders were travelling in the desert of Scete. On hearing someone's muttering coming out of the ground, they looked for the entrance of the cave. They entered and found an aged, holy virgin lying there. They said to her, "From where did you come here, old lady? Who looks after you?" for they found nothing in the cave other than her lying there, alone and sick. She said, "I have been in this cave for thirty-eight years, satisfied with wild plants and serving Christ, and except for today, I have not seen a person. God has sent you to me so that you can bury my remains," and saying this, she fell asleep. The elders glorified God and, when they had buried her body, went their way.

N 132 D 13. They told the story of an anchorite who went out into the desert with only one *leviton*. After he had walked around for three days he went up onto a rock and saw some greenery down below it and a man grazing as the

wild animals do. He quietly got down from there and laid his hands on the man. The elder was naked; and scorning because he could not tolerate the smell of men, he was able to break loose from him and run away. The brother went running after him and cried out, "It is for the sake of God that I am pursuing you—wait for me!" The other turned and said to him, "It is for the sake of God that I too am running away from you!" Then [the brother] threw off the *leviton* and ran on after him. Seeing that he had thrown off his clothing, [the elder] said as he caught up with him, "Since you have thrown off from you the material of the world, I too have waited for you." [The brother] besought him, saying, "Father, utter a saying for me. How I can be saved?" He said to him, "Flee from folk and keep silence, and you shall be saved."

14. They used to say of someone who lived at The Cells that he kept the following rule: he slept during four hours of the night, stood four hours for the *synaxis*, and worked four more. In the daytime he worked again until the sixth hour, read from the sixth to the ninth, and split palm fronds for himself; then from after the ninth hour he took thought for his food. He regarded his cell as an accessory [*parergion*]. That was how he completed the day.

15. One of the anchorites recounted something like this to the brothers at Raïthou, where there are seventy palm trees, the place where Moses and the people camped when they went out of the land of Egypt [see Exod 15:27]: "I once opted to penetrate into the inner desert to see if I could find anybody living and serving Christ the Lord-and-master [somewhere] farther in than me. After travelling four days and four nights, I found a cave, and when I approached, I looked in and saw a man sitting down. As is the custom with monks, I knocked for him to come out and greet me, but he did not move, N 132 A

for he was dead. Without any hesitation I went in and grasped his shoulder, but it promptly came away and turned to dust. Looking more intently, I saw a tunic hanging there, and that too dissolved into nothing when I took hold of it. In my confusion I came out of there and travelled the desert.

"I found another cave with the footprints of a man. Encouraged, I approached the cave, and having knocked again without anybody hearing me, I entered and found nobody. Standing outside the cave, I was saying to myself, 'The servant of God has to come, wherever he might be.' Then just as the day was ending, I saw some buffaloes coming and the servant of God in the midst of them. He was naked, concealing the private parts of the body with hair. He stopped to pray as he approached me, thinking that I was a spirit, for (as he later affirmed) he was greatly troubled by unclean spirits. When I realized this, I said to him, 'Servant of God, I am a man; see my footprints and feel me, for I am flesh and blood.' He examined me after finishing the prayer with the 'Amen' and was reassured.

"Taking me into the cave, he asked me, 'How do you come to be here?' 'It was to search for the servants of God that I came into this desert,' I said, 'and God has not disappointed my desire.' Then I inquired of him, 'And how did you yourself come to be here? How long have you been here? How are you fed, and how come you do not need clothing in your nakedness?' He said, 'I was in a *coenobion* in the Thebaid working as a linen weaver, but a *logismos* came upon me, saying, "Go out and live alone, then you will be able to practice *hēsychia* and hospitality, and you will obtain a larger reward for the toil of your labor." As I gave in to the *logismos*, I set about the task. I built a monastery and had customers. Procuring many collections, I was at pains to make distributions to the poor people and foreigners. But our enemy the devil, jealous then (as always) of our

forthcoming reward, opposed me in my efforts to offer the fruit of my labor to God. Noticing a nun who had placed an order with me that I had fulfilled and delivered, he put it into her mind to place other orders with me, and from frequent contact we began to speak with each other in a familiar way. Finally there came holding of hands, laughter, and delighting in the company of each other—until we travailed and brought forth iniquity.

"'For six months I lived in sin with her before I reckoned that whether I died that day, the next day, or many years hence, I was going to suffer eternal punishment. If a man who violates another man's wife is subject to eternal chastisement under the law, how much more deserving of retribution is he who defiles the handmaid of the Lord? Thus I ran away in secret to this desert, leaving everything to the woman. When I got here, I found this cave, this spring, and that palm tree, which produces twelve clusters of dates a year for me. Each month it bears one cluster, and that suffices me for thirty days, and then the next cluster ripens. After a long time my hair grew, and my clothes having worn out, I cover the shameful parts of the body with it.'

"When I asked him again whether it was difficult for him there in the early days, he said, 'In the early days I was greatly tormented, so much so that I had to lie on the ground because of the liver and could not even stand to offer the *synaxis*. I was crying to the Most High, lying on the ground in my cave. I was very disheartened and in pain, quite unable to go out. Then I saw a man come in and stand beside me, saying, "What is the matter with you?" Heartened a little by this, I said, "I am suffering with the liver." "Where are you suffering?" he said to me, and I showed him the place. He joined the outstretched fingers of his hand and cut the place as though with a sword. He took out the liver and showed me the damaged parts of it. He scratched off the polluted

bit with his hand and threw it into a cloth. Then he put the liver back, anointed the place with his hand, and said to me, "Here, you have become healthy; serve Christ the Lord-and-master as is fitting." From then on, I became healthy, living here continuously without trouble since then.'

"I begged him at length to allow me to stay in the first cave, but he said I could not withstand the onslaughts of the demons. Coming to the same conclusion, I begged him to send me on my way with a prayer, so he prayed and then dismissed me. This I have told you for your benefit."

N 132 B

16. Another elder who was deemed worthy to be bishop of the city of Oxyrrynchos used to tell [this] as though somebody else told it to him, but he himself was the one who did it. He said, "Once I decided to penetrate into the remoter desert, around the oasis where the Mazic people are, to see whether I could find anybody serving Christ. Taking a few dried loaves and water for about four days, I began the journey. When the four days were up, the food was exhausted, and I was at a loss for what to do. Taking courage, I dedicated myself [to God] and journeyed on for another four days, remaining unfed. But, no longer tolerating the strain of the lack of food and the weariness of the journey, I fainted and lay on the ground. Then somebody came and touched my lips with his finger, just as a doctor runs over the eye with a probe. Immediately I was strengthened so that I thought I had neither travelled nor been famished. As I perceived this strength coming upon me, I got up and journeyed across the desert. When another four days went by, again I became exhausted. I stretched out my hands to heaven, and here there was the man who strengthened me before. Again he anointed my lips with his finger and strengthened me. Seventeen days went by, and after that I found a shack, a palm tree, and water. A man stood there whose

clothing was the hair of his head, completely white: an awesome sight. When he saw me, he stood in prayer; when he had said 'Amen,' he realized that I was a man, so taking me by the hand, he stood in prayer again and then asked me, 'How did you come to be here? Is everything still holding together in the [outside] world? Are persecutions still in force?' I said, 'It is on account of you who truly serve Christ the Lord-and-master that I am crossing this desert. The persecution business is ended by the grace of God. Explain to me how you yourself came to be here.' Bitterly lamenting and weeping, he began to say, 'I was a bishop; there was a persecution, and many torments were inflicted on me. Unable to endure the torture, I sacrificed.[1] Then, coming to my senses, I acknowledged my transgression and surrendered myself to die in this desert. For forty-nine years I have been living here, confessing and beseeching God that in some way my sin might be forgiven me. The Lord provided me with food from this date palm; for forty-eight years I received no comfort of forgiveness, but this year I have been comforted.'

"Even as he was saying this, he suddenly got up, ran out, and stood in prayer for several hours. He came to me when he finished the prayer; at the sight of his face, consternation and dread came upon me, for he had become like fire. 'Do not be afraid,' he said to me, 'for the Lord has sent you to take charge of my body and to bury it.' As he finished speaking, he straightaway stretched out his hands and feet and brought his life to a close. Undoing my *leviton* and leaving half of it for myself, I wrapped his holy body in the other half and concealed it in the ground.

"When I had buried him, the date palm withered away and the shack fell down. I wept a great deal, entreating

[1] That is, he offered sacrifice or offered incense in the imperial cult. This is a euphemism for apostasy.

God that in some way he might grant me the date palm and allow me to spend the rest of my days in that place; but since that did not happen, I told myself that it was not the will of God [for me] to be there. So, after praying, I made my way back again to the inhabited world, and here the man who anointed my lips came and strengthened me. In that way I managed to return to the brothers. I told them everything and begged them not to despair of themselves but to find God by patient endurance."

N 491 17. A brother asked an elder, saying, "Is one saved by his reputation or by his deeds?" The elder replied to him, "Deeds." And the elder said, "I know a brother who would pray now and then and at once his request was heard. But the thought entered his mind that he would like to see how the soul of a sinner and of a righteous person was drawn from the body. As God did not want to disappoint him in his wish, while he was residing in his cell, a wolf came in to him and, laying hold on the brother's clothing with its mouth, began dragging him outside. He got up and followed it as far as a city; there it left the brother and went its way.

"He was staying at a monastery outside the city that housed an inmate who had the reputation of being a great anchorite. However, that very anchorite was ill and was awaiting the hour of death; the brother who had come there saw a great assembly of lamps and candles made ready for the anchorite. The entire city was weeping for him, as if through him God furnished those inhabiting the city with bread and water and kept them safe. And they were saying that it was through him that God was preserving the entire city: 'If anything happens to him, we shall all die.'

"When the critical moment arrived, the brother beheld a hellish [inhabitant] of the underworld coming down above the anchorite with a fiery trident, and he heard a voice saying this: 'Since his soul never gave me a moment's rest, neither shall you, drawing out his

soul, have mercy on him. He shall know no repose for eternity.' Plunging the fiery trident that he was holding into the man's heart, the infernal one tortured him for some considerable time and drew out his soul.

"After that the brother went into the city and found a stranger lying sick in the square with nobody to care for him; he stayed a day with him. When the hour of death came, the brother saw Michael and Gabriel coming down for his soul; one sat on the right and the other on his left, and they were asking his soul to come out. Since it did not begin to leave, as if it were unwilling to quit its body, Gabriel said to Michael, 'Draw it out so that we can go,' but Michael answered him, 'We were commanded by our Lord-and-master to remove it painlessly, so we cannot tear it out by force.' So Michael cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, what do you want us [to do] with this soul because it refuses to come out?' There came a voice to him saying, 'Look, I am sending David with his harp and all those who sing to God in Jerusalem so that when it hears the psalm, it may come out at [the sound of] their voices with gladness, since you have not compelled it.' When they all came down and surrounded his soul, singing hymns, the soul came out and seated itself in Michael's hands and was borne off with joy."

18. = 18.51. N 492

19. The fathers said there was one Macarius who first made a monastery at Scete. It is a desert place beyond Nitria, a day and a night's journey away. In addition, there is great danger for those who go there. For if one diverges even a little, he is in peril, wandering in the desert. They are all perfect men there, and no one who is imperfect can survive in the same ferocious place, completely arid and devoid of any consolation of the necessities of life. It was here that the Macarius mentioned above, since he was a man of the city, joined himself one day with Macarius the Great. *HME* 23

When they came to cross the Nile, they happened to go onboard a large ferry wherein two tribunes had embarked with a great deal of ostentation. They had a chariot with them and horses whose bridles were of gold. There were some soldiers attending them and slaves with golden collars and some with golden belts. When the tribunes saw these two monks sitting in a corner, clothed in old rags, they began blessing [*emakarizon*] their poverty, and one of the tribunes said to them, "Blessed [*makarioi*] are you who have laughed at this world." In reply Macarius of the city [of Alexandria] said to them, "We laughed at that world, but this world is laughing at you. Be aware, however, that you did not say this of your own will,[2] for we are both called 'blessed,' *makarioi*, that is." Touched by his saying, the tribune rid himself of his clothes when he returned home and began to be a monk, distributing much in alms.

Macarius 38

20. = 3.19.

N 489

21. Once when a certain elder[3] was praying in his own cell, a voice came to him, saying, "Macarius, you have not yet attained the stature of the two women of this city." The elder got up early, took his staff, and began to make the journey to the city. When he got there and ascertained the place, he knocked at the door. One of the women came out and invited him into her house. He sat down and invited them [to do likewise]. They came and seated themselves beside him. The elder said to them, "It is on your account that I have endured such toil; so tell me, what is your activity?" "Believe us, Abba," they told him, "we were never a night out of our husbands' beds; how could we have an activity?" The elder apologized and begged them to reveal their activity to him. Then they said to him, "We were strangers to each other in

[2] *HME* adds, "but by divine intervention."

[3] Macarius in N 489, Antony in *BHG* 1442xg.

the world, but we decided to marry two blood brothers. Today it is fifteen years that we two have been living in this house. We are not aware of having ever quarrelled with each other or that an evil word has passed between us. We have been living in peace and harmony all that time. It did cross our mind to join the order of virgins, but when our husbands were begged, they were not persuaded by us in this matter. Frustrated in that project, we two made a covenant of this kind between ourselves and God: that we would speak no worldly thing until we died." When the elder heard [this], he said, "Indeed, this is no virgin or spouse or monk or worldling; God gives the Spirit to those who choose to be like these."

22. An elder said that there was an elder living in the desert, serving God for many years, and he began beseeching God, saying, "Lord, assure me that I have pleased you," and he saw an angel saying to him, "You have not become like the greengrocer in such and such a place." In wonder, the elder said to himself, "I am going to the city to see him. In what kind of activity has he been engaged that it surpasses my activity and the drudgery of so many years?" N 67

The elder set out and came to the place of which he had heard from the angel and found the man sitting, selling vegetables. So he sat down beside him for the rest of the day, and as the man shut up the shop, the elder said to him, "Brother, could you put me up in your cell tonight?" Full of joy, the man welcomed him. So off he went into the cell, and as the man was making preparations for the need and refreshment of the elder, the elder said to him, "Of your charity, brother, tell me your way of life." As the man was unwilling to speak out, the elder persisted at length in his request, so the man reluctantly spoke [of it]. "I only eat in the evening. When I shut up shop, I only take what I need for food; the rest I give to those in need, and if I welcome one of the servants of God, I spend it on them [*sic*]. On rising at dawn, before sitting down at my

place of work, I say, 'This city, from the smallest to the greatest, shall enter the kingdom of God by virtue of its just deeds; I alone shall inherit chastisement on account of my sins.' Then again, in the evening, I say the same thing before going to sleep."

On hearing this, the elder said, "This is a fine activity, but it does not deserve to pass my drudgery over so many years." Now, just as they were going to eat, the elder heard some people singing songs, for the greengrocer's cell was in a populous location. "Brother," the elder said to him, "since you so wish to lead a godly life, how is it you stay in this location? Are you not disturbed when you hear them singing these songs?" "I tell you, Abba," said the man, "I have never been troubled or scandalized." On hearing this, the elder said, "Well, what are you thinking in your heart when you hear these [songs]?" and he said, "I am thinking that they are all entering the kingdom." The elder was amazed on hearing this, and he said, "This is indeed the activity that surpasses my toil of so many years." He prostrated himself, saying, "Forgive me, brother; I have not yet attained this stature," and he retreated into the desert again without having eaten.

N 19 23. The fathers used to say of a great elder that while he was walking in the desert, he saw two angels who were accompanying him, one on the right, the other on the left. As they were walking along, they found a corpse lying on the road. The elder covered his nose because of the stench, and the angels did so too. When they had gone on a little way, the elder said, "You smelled that too?" "Not at all," they said, "but we too covered [our noses] for your sake. For we do not smell the impurity of this world; nor does it reach us. But souls that have the stench of sin, we smell their smell."

N 628 24. One of the fathers told how the bishop of a rural diocese died and the local people came to the archbishop at

the metropolis, asking him to ordain them a bishop to replace the dead bishop. The archbishop said to them, "Give me someone whom you know to be proven capable of being a shepherd of Christ's flock, and I will ordain him for you as bishop." They said, "We don't know anybody, unless your angel provide [somebody] for us." "Are you all here?" the archbishop said to them. "No," they said, and he said to them, "Go, get everybody gathered together, and then come to me so that the bishop chosen by you shall be agreeable to you all." Off they went and got everybody together; then they came begging for a bishop to be ordained for them. "Tell me in whom you have confidence," he said to them, but they said, "We don't know anyone other than him whom your angel will bestow on us." He said to them, "Are you all here?" "We are all here," they said, and again he said, "Not one of you has been left outside?" and they said, "Not one of us has been left out, except the fellow tending our mayor's ass." The archbishop said to them, "Do you have confidence if I give you the one in whom I have confidence?" and they all said, "We have confidence, and we beseech your holiness to give us him in whom God gives you confidence." Then the archbishop ordered the fellow who was tending the mayor's ass to be brought in, and he said to them, "Have you confidence if I ordain this man bishop for you?" "Yes," they said, and he ordained him. They accepted him and went back to their diocese with great joy.

A severe drought ensued; the one who had become bishop besought God for it to rain, and a voice came to him saying, "Go out to such and such a gate of the city first thing in the morning and stop whomever you see coming in first. Let him pray—and the rain will come." He did so; going out with his clergy, he took a seat, and just then a dark-skinned old man came in carrying a load of wood to sell in the city. The bishop stood up and stopped him, whereupon the old man promptly set

down his load of wood. The bishop begged him, saying, "Abba, pray that rain might come!" but the old man did not want to. Nevertheless, he did pray when he was mightily entreated, and here, straightaway, there [fell] rain like an outpouring of the heavens—and it would not have stopped had he not prayed again.

The bishop besought the old man, saying, "Of your charity, Abba, give us the benefit of your life story, that we too might emulate it." The old man said, "Forgive me, Sir Pope; here, as you see me, I go out and cut myself this little load of wood [then] come in and sell it. I do not retain [the price of] more than two little loaves; I give the rest to the poor. I sleep at the church then go out again next day and do likewise. If the weather is inclement for a day or two, I remain fasting until the weather is fair again, and I can go out and cut [wood]." Having benefitted greatly from the old man's activity, they returned glorifying God.[4]

[4] N 628 adds, "and they said to him, 'You have really fulfilled that which is written, "I am a stranger on earth"'" [see Ps 38:13].

21

Sayings [*Apophthegmata*] of Those Who Grew Old in the Ascetic Life, Briefly Demonstrating Their Supreme Virtue

1. An elder was asked, "What is the love of money?" and he answered "It is not believing in God that he is taking care of you, to despair of the promises of God, and to be fond of harmful pleasures."

2. He was also asked, "What is slandering?"[1] and he answered, "It is to be ignorant of God and of his glory; it is envy toward one's neighbor."

3. He was also asked, "What is wrath?" and he answered, "Strife, falsehood, and ignorance."

4. An elder was asked, "What sort of person must the monk be?" and he answered, "In my opinion, as one alone relating to one alone." N 89

5. An elder was asked, "Why am I afraid when I walk about in the desert?" "Because you are still alive," he replied. N 90

6. An elder was asked, "What should one do to be saved?" He was braiding rope and not looking up from his work, and he replied, "What you see here." N 91

[1] Or backbiting [*katalalia*].

7. An elder was asked, "How come you are never discouraged?" and he answered, "Because every day I expect to die."

N 92 8. He was also asked, "Why am I continually negligent?" "Because you have never seen the sun," he replied.

N 93 9. An elder was asked, "What is the monk's task?" "Discretion," he replied.

N 94 10. An elder was asked, "Whence does the temptation to *porneia* come to me?" and he replied, "From overeating and sleeping."

N 95 11. An elder was asked, "What must the monk do?" "Apply himself to every good deed and refrain from every evil one," he replied.

N 96 12. The elders used to say that prayer is the monk's mirror.

N 97 13. The elders used to say, "There is nothing worse than judging."

N 97 A 14. The elders used to say that one should give no guarantees to *logismoi*.

N 98 15. The elders used to say that the crown of the monk is humble-mindedness.

N 99 16. The elders used to say, "Say to every *logismos* that comes upon you, 'Are you on our side or the adversaries'?' and it is sure to declare itself."

N 100 17. The elders used to say that the soul is a spring: if you dig, it is purified; if you pile on earth, it disappears.

N 101 18. An elder said, "I am convinced that the God who is capable of bringing us out of prison and throwing us into it is not unjust."

N 102 19. An elder said, "To be hard on oneself in every respect—that is the way of God."

20. He also said, "A monk who does not work is judged to be arrogant."

21. An elder said, "If God is patient and forgives us when we do wrong, how much more likely is he to support our efforts when we act correctly?"

22. An elder said, "Never do anything without first examining your heart to see whether what you are about to do is godly." N 103

23. An elder said, "If it is only when a monk is standing in prayer that he prays, such a one does not pray at all." N 104

24. An elder said, "I have been twenty years fighting against one *logismos* in order to see all men as one." N 105

25. An elder said, "Discretion is greater than all the virtues." N 106

26. An elder was asked whence the soul acquires humility. "When it is only concerned with its own sins," he replied. N 107

27. An elder said, "He who hears slander ought to run away, and he who slanders is set right."

28. An elder said, "I did not repeat the things that I was able to accomplish." N 109

29. An elder said, "Just as the earth never falls down, neither does he who humbles himself ever fall." N 108

30. An elder said, "It is shameful if a monk has abandoned his possessions and become a stranger for the sake of God and then afterward goes off to chastisement." N 110

31. An elder said, "This generation is not looking out for today, but for tomorrow." N 112

32. The elders used to say, "Our task is to burn wood." N 113; see 21.63

33. He also said, "Do not wish to avoid being despised." N 114

N 115 34. An elder said, "Humility neither gets angry nor angers anybody."

N 116 35. Again he said, "Remaining in the cell provides a plethora of good things."

N 117 36. An elder said, "Woe to the man whose reputation is greater than his activity."

N 118 37. An elder said, "Bold talk and laughter are like fire burning up a straw."

N 119 38. An elder said, "He who is hard on himself for the sake of God is like a person who is a confessor."

N 120 39. The same [elder] said, "Whoever has become a fool for the Lord's sake [see 1 Cor 3:18], the Lord will make him wise."

N 121 40. An elder said, "The man who has death before his eyes at all times vanquishes faintheartedness."

N 122 41. An elder said, "These are what God requires of a person: thought, word, and deed."

N 123 42. The same [elder] said, "A person needs these things: to fear the judgment of God, to hate sin, to love virtue, and to entreat God at all times."

43. An elder said, "In the same way that we carry around the breath of the nostril everywhere, so [should] we always have with us weeping and the fear of death, wherever we might be."

44. An elder said, "Reading the divine Scriptures terrifies the demons."

N 420 = 11.100 45. An elder said, "Unless we root out the little plant that is negligence, it becomes a great wart."

N 673 = 8.28 46. An elder said, "Thinking like a human removes all the [spiritual] fat[2] from a person and leaves him dried out."

[2] *Piotēs*; see Ps 62:6.

47. An elder said, "Do your best to be blameless, and do not seek distinction."

48. An elder said, "Thanksgiving intercedes for frailty before the Lord." N 637

49. An elder said, "As long as you take repose, you cannot give repose to God."

50. An elder said, "Curtail your solicitude and your belly, and you will have repose."

51. An elder said, "Go and love to do yourself violence." N 25a

52. An elder said, "In my case the body has not tolerated my choice . . ."[3] N 661b

53. An elder said, "Become a free man and do not become a slave; in your speaking be in control of passion and desire, and then you will not be disturbed at your departing, having prepared your tasks."

54. An elder said, "He who praises a monk is delivering him into the hands of the enemy." N 498

55. An elder said, "He who speaks a word of comfort ought not to speak unless he considers himself to be the primary beneficiary." see N 433

56. The fathers used to say that nobody is able to love Jesus if he does not first love toil.

57. Alienation for God's sake is a good thing if it includes keeping silent, for boldness of speech is not alienation.

58. An elder said, "To make oneself of no account now is a battlement."

59. An elder said, "God does not want the reluctant or the lazy one." N 602

[3] That is, probably, "of life" or "has never accepted to obey all I require of it."

60. An elder said, “Keep a watch on your conscience with respect to your neighbor, and you will have repose.”

61. An elder said, “The root of all good works is truth.”

62. An elder said, “A person who does not receive all people as equal but makes distinctions—such a person cannot be perfect.”

63. The elders used to say, “In the same way that fire burns wood, so the work of the monk ought to burn the passions.”

64. An elder said, “The monk must be one who does not listen in, does not back bite, and does not take offense.”

65. A brother asked an elder, “Until when should one keep silent?” and he said, “Until you are asked, for it is written, ‘Do not answer before hearing” [see Sir 11:8].

66. A brother asked an elder about life, and he replied, “Eat hay, wear hay, sleep on hay, and acquire a steely heart.”

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